

I report on the state of reconnaissance training of the Headquarters of the KBF Air Force on August 1, 40 ...

Target cases continue to start and are replenished with incoming material, in particular, the Stockholm object has been duplicated in 20 copies. and sent out piecemeal. Kalmar and Karlskrona facilities are being developed. In total, the Air Force has opened: 270 cases of targets, of which 91 in Sweden, 90 in Germany, and 36 in Finland.

Beginning intelligence department of the headquarters of the KBF Air Force captain Semishin

" (142) to the head of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the KBF Air Force. On No. 1/668s dated August 14, 40

"... by September 1, 1940, report on the purposes for which the cases in Finland, Sweden are drawn up and whether they are in all regiments. At the same time, tell us whether you received the object "Stockholm" from the intelligence department of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and what shortcomings it has.

Speed up the processing of cases in order to finish them as soon as possible. Chief of the 2nd Department of

the First Department of the Naval Aviation Headquarters, Major Klimashin " (143).

Marshal Mannerheim, as far as one can judge from his memoirs, had little doubt that Finland was on the verge of a new war:

*"... Finland, already in the autumn of 1940, could again become a victim of an attack that the country would not have been able to repel ... Just as before the start of the Winter War, the number of border violations by aircraft dangerously increased ... The confessions of all Bolshevik agents, without exception, detained by us, testified , that preparations for the war against Finland were in full swing. The data of the Finnish counterintelligence spoke about this even more accurately. In August 1940, one colonel and two majors, who were preparing scouts for being sent to Finland, said: "Finland is a capitalist country that will face the same fate as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The inclusion of Finland in the USSR is a matter of several weeks, at most, several months ... " (22, pp. 359, 363) Even more remarkable is the fact that German intelligence did not doubt that the war was coming. August 13, 1940, **considering the imminent takeover***

In Finland, the Soviet Union had already decided the matter, Hitler ordered the preparation of an operation code-named "Renntier" (65, p. 142). The idea was to capture the Finnish nickel mines in Petsamo on the eve of (or already during) the Soviet invasion, for which a strike was planned from northern Norway by the forces of two Wehrmacht mountain rifle divisions (later this private operation was implemented, but on a much larger scale, in the summer of 1941 .) Today, on the basis of authentic documents of the Soviet military

command, we can firmly state that both Mannerheim and Hitler were mistaken in their predictions. **There was no operational deployment of the Red Army troops for military operations in the northern theater of operations in the autumn of 1940.** The document that makes it possible to make such a peremptory statement is, in our opinion, the Report of Colonel Mironov, head of the operational flights department of the Red Army Air Force headquarters, dated December 2, 1940 (136).

The report provides generalized and systematized information about all major regroupings of the Red Army Air Force units carried out in 1940. And insofar as the preparation and conduct of a strategic offensive operation in World War II was no longer possible without the involvement of significant aviation forces, the report of Colonel Mironov can be considered, although implicit, but an exhaustive "report" on the plans and actions of the USSR Armed Forces in 1940. Familiarity with the contents of the report shows that during 1940 there were four episodes of major strategic air regroupings:

1. January - February. 29 air regiments were relocated to the Leningrad Military District and to the air bases of the Soviet Union in Estonia (hereinafter, separate air squadrons and tactical reconnaissance squadrons attached to rifle corps will not be mentioned). In March, 29 air regiments were returned to their places of permanent deployment. The meaning of this regrouping is quite obvious - this is the "winter war" and the strengthening of the Soviet aviation grouping in the theater associated with it. The war ended - and all 29 regiments returned to their places.

2. April. 6 air regiments were relocated to the Transcaucasian Military District (all regiments are bombers). There they remained. It can be assumed that the strengthening of the grouping of the Soviet Air Force in the Transcaucasus

was due to the extreme aggravation of relations between the USSR and the Anglo-French bloc, which emerged in the spring of 1940. From the Transcaucasian airfields, Soviet bombers could strike at British and French military targets in Iran, Iraq, and Syria. 3. May - June. 14 air regiments (including 10 bomber regiments) were

relocated to the Odessa Military District. Then, also in June, three regiments returned to the place of permanent deployment. The content of the event is quite clear. This is preparation for a possible armed conflict with Romania, and then the creation of a large aviation group on the newly acquired territory of Bessarabia (Moldova). 4. June. *"To the state borders of Lithuania, Latvia and*

Estonia " (as in the text. - M.S.) the 21st air regiment was deployed.

In the same month, 11 air regiments returned to their places of permanent deployment. And in this case, everything is clear - before us is preparation for the occupation of the Baltic states, and then the creation of an aviation group as part of the new Baltic Special Military District. That's all. No

other major regroupings of aviation in 1940 were recorded. With a probability close to 100%, this means that the occupation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was the last strategic offensive operation of 1940. **Preparations for the invasion of Finland did not pass in 1940 into the stage of practical measures for the operational deployment of troops.**

Chapter

2.4 "Invade, defeat and take possession..."

The conclusion we arrived at at the end of the previous chapter is by no means trivial. The concentration of ground and air forces, the rapid deployment of a group of troops and the subsequent invasion would be a completely logical conclusion to the "pressing" of Finland that lasted all summer. But this did not happen, although **the plans for the "Finnish campaign" were developed and refined at least throughout the autumn of 1940.** Chronologically,

the first among the available strategic planning documents of 1940 is the "Memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to I.V. Stalin and V.M. in the East", w / n, signed no later than August 16, 1940 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 239, l. 1–37). In parentheses, we note that Fund 16 of the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, which stores this and other documents of military planning, which will be discussed in this chapter, has not yet been declassified, which means that no one, except for biased "historians from Glavpur", according to still unavailable. In other words, for more than 10 years there has been a completely crazy situation when a number of military historical documents have been published, but not declassified! As a result, we can neither verify the conformity of the published texts with the original documents, nor fill in the fragments that may have been "forgotten" by the publishers, nor, most importantly, find other similar documents. It is impossible to call such a situation otherwise than a "theater of the absurd" - but for lack of a better one, we will work with what we have.

The document of August 16 was drawn up by Vasilevsky, signed by Timoshenko and Shaposhnikov. The authors of the Memorandum state that *"the Soviet Union needs to be ready to fight on two fronts: in the West against Germany, supported by Italy, Finland and Romania, and possibly Turkey, and in the East - against Japan"* (120, p. 182). At the same time, it is indicated that

Finland can field up to 15 rifle divisions and 400 aircraft.

The main events, according to the plan of the high command of the Red Army, should take place in the west: *"The main task of our troops is application defeat by the German forces concentrating in East Prussia and in the Warsaw area; with an auxiliary strike, defeat the enemy grouping in the area of Ivangorod, Lublin, Grubeshov, Tomashev, Sandomierz (southern Poland. - M.S.)"* (120, p. 186). The northwestern (Finnish) direction, within the framework of the goals and objectives of this plan, is considered only as one of the secondary ones: *"... Strategic deployment in the north-west of our borders is subordinated primarily to the defense of Leningrad, covering the Murmansk railway and keeping our complete dominance in Finnish bay."*

The entry into the war of Finland alone is unlikely (highlighted by me. - M.S.), *the most real case is the simultaneous participation in the war of Finland with Germany. Considering the possible correlation of forces, our actions in the northwest should be reduced to the active defense of our borders"* (120, p. 190).

On August 16, 1940, Marshal Shaposhnikov was replaced as Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army by Army

General Meretskov. On September 18, signed by Tymoshenko and Meretskov (performed by Vasilevsky), two new documents are issued. One of them: memorandum No. 103202 / ov of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov "On the fundamentals of the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and in the East" (TsAMO, f.16, op. 2951, d. 239, l. 197–244). Both in name and, to a large extent, in content, this document repeated the strategic deployment plan of August 16, 1940. In relation to the northwestern direction, the goals and objectives were repeated literally word for word. The only change was a slight increase in the composition of the grouping of Soviet troops on the Finnish border - from 11 rifle divisions, 2 rifle and 3 tank brigades to 13 rifle divisions, 2 rifle and 3 tank brigades (120, pp. 237-254).

As part of the plan for a big war with Germany (on the territory of "former Poland" and East Prussia), the Finnish direction remained a secondary passive area. On the same day,

September 18, 1940, with the same awe-inspiring inscriptions ("Special importance. Top secret. Only in person. The only copy"), Timoshenko and Meretskov sent memorandum No. 103203 to Stalin and Molotov - "Considerations for the deployment Armed Forces of the Red Army in case of war with Finland" (TsAMO, f.16, op.2951, d. 237, l.138–156). This time, **the most decisive considerations were**

expressed about the fate of Finland: *"... by a strike by the main forces of the North-Western Front*

through Savonlinna to San Michel (Mikkeli) and through Lappeenranta to Heinola, bypassing the fortifications created in the Helsingfors direction, and by a simultaneous strike from Vyborg through Sippola to Helsingfors (Helsinki), invade central Finland, defeat the main forces of the Finnish army here and capture the central part of Finland. This strike should be combined with an attack on Helsingfors from the side of the Hanko Peninsula and with the actions of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet in the Gulf of Finland" (120, p. 256).

Immediately, we note that the words "German", "Germanic" do not occur in any case in this document. "Invade, defeat and capture" was supposed to **be without any connection** with the actual (or at least expected) presence of German troops in Finland! To implement the plan of the operation, it was planned to include four armies in the North-Western Front, which were assigned the following tasks (see Map No. 4): - The 7th Army (headquarters - Suojärvi) "strike in the direction of Joensuu and capture the Kuopio area . *In the future, keep in mind the actions on Jyväskylä,*

- The 22nd Army (headquarters - Kexholm, troops deployed along the northwestern shore of Lake Ladoga) *"to capture San Michel with a strike through Savonlinna. In the future, depending on the situation, keep in mind actions - either together with the 23rd Army on Heinola, or in cooperation with the 7th Army on Jyväskylä and further on Tampere, "*

- 23rd Army (headquarters - Karisalmi, 30 km northeast of Vyborg) *"through Lappeenranta to strike at Heinola and capture the latter"*, - 20th Army (headquarters - Vyborg) *to*

break through the enemy's fortifications and reach the Kouvola front, Kotka; in the future, in cooperation with the 23rd Army and the offensive from Hanko, strike at Helsingfors " (120, pp. 258–259). Two armies (7th and 23rd) were already part of the Leningrad Military

District in peacetime. The other two (22nd and 20th) were supposed to be created on the basis of formations and headquarters, respectively, of the Ural and Oryol military districts. The idea of access to the Gulf of Bothnia and the border with Sweden in the Kemi-Oulu region,

which was constantly present in the operational plans of the Soviet-Finnish wars, was not forgotten either. For actions in North Karelia, another front (Northern Front) was created, which was given the following tasks: *"... by decisive actions in the directions of Rovaniemi - Kemi and Uleaborg (Oulu) , reach the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, cut off northern*

Finland and interrupt ground communications in central Finland with Sweden and Norway..." (120, p. 259)

The composition of the Northern Front (created on the basis of the command and headquarters of the Arkhangelsk Military District) included two armies (14th and 21st) and a separate 20th rifle corps. The 14th (Murmansk) army was given the same task that it successfully solved during the "winter war" - the capture of the port and nickel mines of Petsamo. The 21st Army (deployed on the basis of the command and headquarters of the Volga Military District) solved the main task of the front: *"to strike in the direction of Rovaniemi - Kemi, reach the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia and capture the Kemi region. In the future, keep in mind the actions on Uleaborg.* The 20th separate rifle corps (Moscow Military District), advancing along the forest impassability, was supposed to deliver an auxiliary strike along the shortest path from Ukhta to Oulu.

The general composition of the planned grouping of troops of the Northern and The Northwestern Fronts are presented in the following table:

	20 А	23 А	22 А	7 А	20 оск	21 А	14 А	Всего
стрелковые дивизии	6	6	5	6	3	9	3	38
танковые бригады	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
артиллерийские полки РГК	4	6	2	0	0	0	1	13
авиационные полки	9	13	5	7	0	4	4	42

But even these very impressive forces did not exhaust the military power that was to fall on Finland. In addition to the above armies, the following were transferred to the command of the North-Western Front:

*"1. On the northwestern coast of the Estonian SSR in the region of Tallinn, the port of Baltiysky - 2 rifle divisions (11th, 126th, PribOVO), one of them is intended **for operations from the Hanko Peninsula to Helsingfors** (highlighted by me. - M.S.) and the second, depending on the situation, or for actions to capture the Aland Islands (at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia), or it can be transferred by rail. road to the main theater of the front. 2. 3 rifle*

divisions in the area of st. Petijärvi, st. Heinioki, Valkyarvi (east of Vyborg). 3.

1 rifle division - in the Leningrad region. 4.

Tank corps in the area of Vyborg, Heinioki, consisting of 2 tank and 1 motorized rifle divisions" (120, p. 259). In

addition, along with aviation subordinate to the command of the armies, 15 and 21 (these are not numbers, this is the number!) Aviation regiments were transferred directly to the command of the commanders of the Northern and North-Western Fronts, respectively. Thus, **46 rifle divisions, 78 air regiments, 13 RGK artillery regiments, 3 tank brigades and one mechanized (tank) corps were to be deployed in the theater of the future Finnish war.** The total number of aircraft involved in the operation was determined by the authors of the Considerations to be 3,900 units (120, p. 256). What's in

one and a half times more than it was on the morning of June 22, 1941, as part of all three Luftwaffe Air Fleets, concentrated on the Eastern Front ... But

that's not all. *"In the reserve of the High Command, to have 2 rifle divisions in the area of Tikhvin, Volkhovstroy, Chudovo."* And also *"to prepare and have in the reserve of the High Command at the points of permanent deployment seven arrows each. divisions from the Western and Kiev military districts, and a total of 14 divisions"* (120, p. 257).

The Red Banner Baltic Fleet was once again tasked with *"destroying the Finnish battle fleet, interrupting Finnish maritime communications in the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland ..."*. A new moment was the demand *"to ensure the possible transfer of 1-2 rifle divisions to the Khanko Peninsula"* (**emphasis mine**. - M.S.). The

plan of September 18, 1940 differs in many respects from the plan of the *"operation to defeat the land and sea forces of the Finnish army"*, signed by Meretskov **on October 29, 1939**. **The first thing that immediately catches your eye is a radical increase in the planned size of the group of Red Army troops. The number of rifle divisions more than doubled (from 21 to 46), artillery regiments of the RGK almost doubled (from 7 to 13), the number of aircraft involved in the operation increased two and a half times (from 1581 to 3900 combat aircraft).** The grouping of troops with the task of "cutting" the territory of Finland and reaching Oulu - **Kemi has increased six times (compared to the "winter war" plan)** . **It is also worth noting that, in accordance with the Big Plan signed on the same day, September 18, 1940,** "only" 146 rifle divisions and 159 aviation regiments were assigned *"to conduct operations in the West"* , *"having 6422 aircraft on September 15"* (120, p. 242). In other words, the forces planned for the war with Finland were: in terms of the number of rifle divisions - one third, in terms of the number of air regiments and aircraft - half of the forces that were supposed to be deployed for the war with the incomparably more powerful and numerous army of Germany and its southern allies (Romania, Hungary).

Large forces corresponded to the new tasks, this time formulated with the utmost clarity. If in

plan on October 29, 1939, the depth of the offensive of the main grouping of the Red Army troops was determined only by reaching the Vyborg - Sortavala line (after which it was necessary to "be ready for further actions inland according to the situation"), then the plan of September 18, 1940 unambiguously demanded "take possession of the central part of Finland" and its capital.

Another significant difference in the plans of 39 and 40 years. becomes obvious if you look at the geographical map of the area of future hostilities. Red arrows are lost among a continuous scattering of blue marks of lakes. The routes of advance of the troops of the 7th, 22nd and 23rd armies run through the largest lake region in Europe (the Saimaa lake system). The free space between the "blue eyes of the lakes" is occupied by dense forests and swamps. Such is the price of the decision taken in September 1940 to deliver the main blow *"bypassing the fortifications created in the Helsingfors direction."* Apparently, the sad experience of breaking through the "Mannerheim Line" with bloody frontal attacks led to the fact that the developers of the plan (i.e. the main "generals of the winter war" Timoshenko and Meretskov), "burned in milk, began to blow on water."

The question of whether the hastily constructed Finnish fortifications along the line of Kotka - Lappeenranta, Kotka - Kouvola represented a barrier so strong that the risk of large possible losses during their breakthrough justified the transfer of the direction of the main attack to the forest thicket, is debatable. With much greater certainty, it can be assumed that it was the decision to strike through the lake-forest region that led to the "negligible" (by Soviet standards, "small") number of tanks allocated for the operation. On September 15, 1940, there were 17.6 thousand tanks in the Red Army (and this is not counting 5.8 thousand T-27 / T-37 / T-38 tankettes). In the Leningrad Military District alone, there were 2766 tanks (again, not counting machine-gun tankettes) (34, p. 594). And for the proposed war against Finland, only 785 tanks were involved in the composition of 3 tank brigades (out of more than 26 that were part of the Red

Army) (120, p. 256). In the text of "Considerations on the deployment of the Armed Forces of the Red Army in the event of a war with Finland" dated September 18, 1940, there is not the slightest mention of a possible date for the start of this war. Nevertheless, the analysis of th

troops allows us to formulate **the hypothesis that another "winter war" was planned.** Strictly speaking, to the question of what time of the year in the region of the Saimaa lake system it is better to conduct a major offensive operation, one should answer: "It is always worse." In winter - deep snow and frost, short daylight hours, which drastically limits the combat capabilities of aviation. In summer - marshy impassability and clouds of blood-sucking midges. Nevertheless, winter, by binding the surface of lakes and marshes with a hard shell of ice, significantly increases the cross-country ability and, consequently, the possibility for tactical and operational maneuver. For the September grouping that looms as "Considerations" (infantry with a minimum number of tanks, supported by very large air forces), winter is still somewhat preferable. Such a conclusion may seem paradoxical, but background of walking legends about "40-degree frost" ^{from} only against the and "two-meter snow cover" that prevented the Red Army from "liberating" Finland in December 1939. Winter in southern Finland (as in all coastal regions of Europe) is quite mild (by our Russian standards).

According to the results of long-term meteorological observations, the average January temperature in Helsinki is 2.7 degrees below zero, and in general in the southern regions of the country - from 3 to 7 degrees. Severe frosts of winter 39-40 years. were a unique natural anomaly,

unprecedented in the previous hundred years. But even in that incredible winter, the air temperature on the Karelian Isthmus in December 1939 never dropped below 23 degrees. It is cold, but for a young man dressed in a sheepskin coat, it is not fatal. 40-degree frosts really came in January-February 1940, but not in the southern, but in the central and northern parts of Finland, which both geographically and climatically represent, in fact, a "different country". As for the "two-meter snow", as every Russian knows, it appears (if it appears) closer to February - March, but not at the beginning of winter. In fact, every year, every winter, there is a fairly long period of time when the ground is already frozen, dirt roads

have become like stone, and the snow has not yet reached

knee. Finally, Russians, Finns, Swedes and other peoples of northern Europe have long invented sleds, sleds and skis to move around the virgin snow. In any

case, the main commander was quite positive about the idea of conducting hostilities in winter. On April 16,

1940, at the evening meeting of the meeting of the highest command staff of the Red Army, Comrade Stalin sharply condemned "individual comrades" who doubted the possibility of fighting in the winter:

"... How can it be allowed that in the draft Charter and in the draft Instructions that people read [it was said] that winter conditions worsen the situation of the war, while all the serious, decisive successes of the Russian army unfolded precisely in winter conditions, starting with the battles of Alexander Nevsky and ending with the defeat of Napoleon. It was in winter conditions that our troops prevailed, because they were more enduring and winter conditions did not constitute any difficulties for them. With so many examples, how can one teach the reader such nonsense that winter conditions lower the combat effectiveness of the

army ... " (20) If our hypothesis is correct and a new war against Finland was planned for the winter of 1940-1941, then this already explains why the pressure campaign launched in the summer and destabilization did not

develop into real hostilities. Stalin was just waiting for a light frost. However, let's repeat this once again, the "winter orientation" of the plan for the war with Finland, drawn up on September 18, 1940, is just a hypothesis that does not have (due to the secrecy of information) direct documentary evidence.

The "Considerations" signed on September 18 ended with the standard phrase for such documents: *"Reporting the basis of our operational deployment against Finland, I ask for their consideration."* On October 5, 1940, this and a number of other strategic military planning documents were reviewed and approved by Stalin. We come to this conclusion on the basis of the memorandum of Timoshenko and Meretskov No. 103313 (TsAMO, f.16, op. 2951, d. 242, l.84-90). This document began with a very strange phrase from the point of view of ordinary common sense: *"I report to your*

approval of the main conclusions from your instructions given on October 5, 1940" (120, p. 289). In other words, the People's Commissar for Defense asked Stalin to confirm in writing that he (Tymoshenko) understood him (Stalin) correctly. Without being distracted by the logical dead end of this situation, let's go straight to paragraph 7 of the memorandum:

"7. Approve the submitted considerations for the development of private deployment plans for combat operations against Finland, against Romania and against Turkey" (120, p. 291).

The plans for "military operations against Romania and against Turkey", unfortunately, have not yet been declassified. As for the war against Finland, preparations for it continued, as clearly evidenced by a new document that appeared two months later: "Directive of the NPO of the USSR and the General Staff of the Red Army to the commander of the Leningrad Military District", b / n, dated November 25, 1940 (TsAMO, f.16, op.2951, file 237, l.118–130). Both in title, and in purpose,

and in addressee, it was a document of a different rank than the "Considerations" of September 18. The "directive" of November 25 is an order from a higher command to subordinates, which order, of course, began and ended not with a "request for consideration", but with specific instructions:

"I order to start developing a plan for the operational deployment of the troops of the North-Western Front Assign

*the code name "C.3.-20" to this deployment plan. The plan is put into effect upon receipt of an encrypted telegram for me and the Chief of the General Staff of the spacecraft with the following signatures: "Proceed to the implementation of" C.3.-20 ". **By February 15, 1941** (highlighted by me. - M.S.)*

the Military Council and the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District should develop in the General Staff of the Red Army:

a) a plan for the concentration and deployment of front troops; b) cover

plan; c) plan for the first operation; d)

an aviation action plan..." (120, pp. 419, 423) and

then five more private plans, which together form a completely completed plan for the operational deployment of the troops of the front (not the "district", note, namely the "front"!).

The concept of the operation, the goals and objectives of the troops, the stages and frontiers of advance remained practically unchanged (in comparison with the "Considerations" of September 18), but became more definite, since the "Directive" of November 25 already included specific deadlines for "final solution" of the Finnish question:

*"... I set the main tasks for the North-Western Front: Defeat the armed forces of Finland, seize its territory within the boundaries (meaning the demarcation with the Northern Front, operating in central and northern Finland. - M.S.) and **access to the Gulf of Bothnia at 45 day of operation**, for which:*

*... on the concentration of troops, be ready **on the 35th day of mobilization**, by special order, to go on the general offensive, deliver the main blow in the general direction to Lappeenranta, Heinola, Hämeenlinna and auxiliary blows in the directions of Korpiselkya - Kuopio and Savonlinna - Mikkeli, defeat the main forces of the Finnish army in the area of Mikkeli, Heinola, Hamina, **on the 35th day of the operation, capture Helsingfors** (here and above it is highlighted by me. - M.S.) and reach the front of Kuopio, Jyväskylä, Hämeenlinna, Helsingfors. ...*

*On the right, the Northern Front (Kandalaksha headquarters) on the 40th day of mobilization goes on the offensive and **on the 30th day of the operation captures the Kemi, Uleaborg** (Oulu) area "(120, p. 420).*

Even more specific was the idea of the enemy. If the September "Considerations" simply did not say anything about the possibility of joint actions of German and Finnish troops, then the "Directive" of November 25 directly began with the words: "In the conditions of the war of the USSR, only against Finland (emphasis mine . - M.S.) *for convenience of control and material support of the troops, two fronts are being created ...* " There was no longer any talk of any "ensuring the security of Leningrad", nothing was said about repelling "Nazi aggression" (Soviet historiography came up with this thesis much later).

The Northwestern Front included the same four armies (20th, 23rd, 22nd and 7th), with the same deployment areas and offensive routes as in the September plan. The total number of rifle divisions and aviation regiments, the composition and location of front reserves (four rifle

divisions, one mechanized corps and 21 aviation regiments). The only innovation was a noticeable increase in the number of tank and motorized brigades and heavy artillery regiments of the RGK involved in the operation:

	20 A	23 A	22 A	7 A	Всего
стрелковые дивизии	6/6	6/6	5/5	6/6	23/23
танковые и моториз. бригады	1/3	1/3	1/2	0/1	3/9
артиллерийские полки РГК	4/5	6/6	2/3	0/2	12/19
авиационные полки	9/9	13/11	5/7	7/7	34/34

Note: The first digit is the "Considerations" of 18 September, the second digit is the "Directive" of 25 November.

The tasks of the mechanized corps, allocated to the reserve of the front command, also became more definite. In

accordance with the "Directive" of November 25, after the troops of the 23rd Army entered the line Savitaipale - Taavetti (20 km west of Lappeenranta) - which, according to the plan, was supposed to happen on the 15th day of the operation - the mechanized corps was supposed to enter the gap that had been created and *"in cooperation with the 20th and 23rd Armies on the 35th day of the operation, capture the Helsingfors region."*

The tasks of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet remained almost unchanged, only the number of rifle divisions landing on Hanko increased (*"To ensure the transfer of two rifle divisions in the very first days of the war from the northern coast of the Estonian SSR to the Hanko Peninsula, as well as the transfer and landing of a large landing force on the Aland Islands ..."*) (120, p. 422). The "Directive" of November 25,

1940 contains information that allows some assumptions about the likely timing of the invasion of Finland. The command of the Leningrad Military District was to complete the development of the operational plan by February 15, 1941. The start of the general offensive was planned for the 35th day from the start of the mobilization and concentration of troops of the North-Western Front (for the Northern Front, taking into account the vast distances and underdevelopment

road network, 40 days were allotted for the full concentration of troops). Thus, the earliest start date for the offensive could be 22 March. But to start a large-scale offensive in southern Finland on March 22 is complete madness: the spring thaw turns the theater of supposed military operations into a continuous boundless swamp by this time. It is unlikely that Tymoshenko and Meretskov, personally familiar with the peculiarities of this area, could plan a "spring war". The closest reasonable date for the implementation of the November plan could only be the summer of 1941.

Closest doesn't mean "most likely". It is possible that the "winter war" was still planned. Unfortunately, nothing

more definite can be said - the "Directive" of November 25, 1940 is chronologically **the last of the options available** to us for developing an operational plan for the war with Finland. Archival funds of the military districts (including Leningrad) for the first half of 1941 are classified. More precisely, almost the entire array of documents from the first half of 1941 (and not just the LenVO documents) is not available, since the RGVA funds chronologically end at the end of 1940, and TsAMO stores (at least, it is officially declared so) documents from the war period, i.e. e. starting from June 22, 1941. A timid reservation "almost" refers to the fact that in some TsAMO funds sometimes there are scattered documents of the period before June 22, sometimes even "to the depth" until January - February 1941. But these are rare and random exceptions to the general rule. On the whole, the first half of 1941 - the key to understanding Stalin's plans and intentions - simply "disappeared", drowned in archival dust ... However, it is not at all worthy of surprise, but the fact that "Considerations" of September 18 and November 1940 by some incredible miracle were published. In the era, the history of which this book is devoted to, in such cases they said: "And where only the organs look ..."

Chapter

2.5 "The main time with Hitler was spent on the Finnish question ..."

November 25, 1940 was undeservedly overlooked by Soviet historiography. And in vain - on this day several significant events happened at once. One of them was discussed in the previous chapter, the other, incomparably more important, was connected with Soviet-German relations. On this day, November 25, 1940, Comrade Molotov, head of the government of the USSR (he is also People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs), informed the German ambassador in Moscow, Count Schulenburg, the conditions under which the Soviet Union was ready to join the Triple Alliance ("axis Rome - Berlin - Tokyo ") as the fourth full member of this "elite club" of aggressors.

If the open publication of the "Directive of NCOs and the General Staff to the Commander of the Leningrad Military District" dated November 25 can be explained by the deplorable irresponsibility ^{And} carelessness of "those who are supposed to", then it was very difficult for the Russian side to avoid publishing the text of the Molotov Statement of November 25, 1940, and most importantly, it was pointless. Since this Statement was addressed to the government of Nazi Germany, and since it suffered a crushing defeat in World War II, the archives of Germany that was defeated and forced to unconditional surrender ended up in the hands of the victors. Thus, the documents of Soviet-German cooperation, in particular, the text of the conditions for the USSR to join the "Pact of Four", ended up in the hands of the Americans and were published in 1948 in the famous collection of the US State Department "Nazi-Soviet Relations".

For almost half a century, Soviet propaganda (and Soviet "historical science" as its integral part) vehemently denounced the "bourgeois falsifiers of history" who dared to cast a shadow on the invariably peaceful foreign policy of their native CPSU. It was announced to the "City and the World" that in fact Comrade Molotov angrily rejected Hitler's insidious proposals and refused even to discuss the possibility of the Soviet Union joining the aggressive bloc

Nazis, fascists and Japanese militarists. Then, after receiving the command "hang up", in the Archive of the President of Russia (f. 3, op. 64, file 675, l. 108) "suddenly" a typewritten text was "suddenly discovered", and even with Molotov's own note: "Transferred to Mr. *Schulenburg* by me on November 25, 1940. And signature: V.

Molotov. Oddly enough, but small and so at first glance, far from the storms of big world politics, Finland was mentioned in the Molotov Statement, and even **in the very first paragraph**:

"The USSR basically agrees to accept the draft four-power pact on their political cooperation and mutual economic assistance, set out by Mr. Ribbentrop in his conversation with V.M. Molotov in Berlin on November 13, 1940 and consisting of 4 points, under the following conditions: 1. if the German troops are

immediately withdrawn from Finland, representing the sphere of influence of the USSR according to the Soviet-German agreement of 1939, and the USSR undertakes to ensure peaceful relations with Finland, and also economic interests of Germany in Finland (export of timber, nickel); 2. if in the coming months the security of the USSR in the

Straits is ensured by concluding a pact of mutual assistance between the USSR and Bulgaria, which, by its geographical position, is in the security sphere of the Black Sea borders of the USSR, and by organizing a military and naval base of the USSR in the area of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles on the basis of a long-term rent; 3. if the region is recognized as the center of gravity of aspiration of the USSR

south of Batum and Baku in a general direction towards the Persian Gulf;

4. if Japan gives up its concession rights for coal and oil in Northern Sakhalin on terms of fair compensation. In accordance with the foregoing, the draft protocol to the Treaty of 4 powers, presented by Mr.

Ribbentrop on the delimitation of spheres of influence, should be changed in the spirit of determining the center of gravity of the aspiration of the USSR in the south of Batum and Baku in the general direction to the Persian Gulf (the Germans proposed to direct the territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union to side of the Indian Ocean, Stalin, through the mouth of Molotov, specified that he was much more interested in oil than Indian tea and elephants with emeralds. - M.S.).

In the same way, the draft protocol outlined by Mr. Ribbentrop, the Agreement between Germany, Italy and the USSR and Turkey, should be changed in the spirit of securing the military and naval base of the USSR near the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles on the basis of a long-term lease with a guarantee of 3 powers of independence and the territory of Turkey in the event that if Turkey agrees to join the four powers. This protocol should provide that in the event of Turkey's refusal to join the four powers, Germany, Italy and the USSR agree to develop and implement the necessary military and diplomatic measures, on which a special agreement should be concluded ... "(120, p. 417) In numbers

deserving of paramount attention, German troops did not appear on the territory of Finland even in the summer of 1941 (the only 163rd Wehrmacht infantry division was in southern Finland, the 2nd and 3rd mountain infantry, 169th infantry division and SS brigade "Nord"; all together this amounted to about 3% of the total number of German forces near the borders of the USSR). In the autumn of 1940, not a single Wehrmacht battalion was stationed in Finland on a permanent basis. Nevertheless, Molotov's claims related to Hitler's brazen encroachment on *the "sphere of influence of the USSR"* were not entirely unfounded. In order to understand this issue, which has suddenly turned into an "apple of discord" between Berlin and Moscow, it is necessary to step back in the presentation of events several months ago.

During the Winter War, Germany, demonstrating absolute loyalty to its new eastern ally, took an emphatically pro-Soviet stance. Already on the third day of the war, a circular telegram was sent from Berlin to the German diplomatic missions abroad: *"In your conversations regarding the Finnish-Russian conflict, please avoid an anti-Russian tone"* (70, p. 29). On December 6, 1939, an additional instruction was sent out: *"In your conversations, sympathy should be expressed regarding the point of view of the Russians. Refrain from expressing any sympathy for the position of the Finns"* (70, p. 33). Diplomatic courtesies were complemented quite

concrete deeds: Germany (despite the many years of lies of Soviet "historians") not only did not sell weapons to the Finns during the "winter war", but also banned the transport of such weapons through German territory and even detained transports with weapons purchased by Finland in third countries in the port of Bergen . It is worth noting that during negotiations with Hitler on November 13, 1940, Molotov readily admitted that *"the Russian government had no reason to criticize the position of Germany during this conflict"* (70, p.

111). In March 1940, Germany and the USSR took a solidarity position in opposition to the creation of a defensive alliance of the three northern countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland), however, in this case, it was not so much the friendly feelings of the partners in the robbery that were decisive, but the pragmatic calculation - Germany was no less than Soviet The Union was at that moment interested in a weak, incapable of armed resistance Scandinavia. Moscow, for its part, supported Hitler's aggression against Norway both politically and, to some extent, practically (by placing at the disposal of the Germans a naval base in the Murmansk region). On April 9, 1940, on the first day of the invasion of Norway, Ambassador Schulenburg visited Molotov, where he was given the most cordial welcome: "... *Molotov declared that*

the Soviet government understood that Germany had been forced to resort to such measures. The British certainly went too far. They have absolutely no regard for the rights of neutral countries. In conclusion, Molotov said literally the

following: "We wish Germany complete victory in her defensive measures" (70, p. 45). However, already in the summer of 1940, the

"candy-bouquet" period in relations between the two dictators began to draw to a close. Germany achieved "complete

victory in her defensive measures", that is, with dizzying speed she established her control over most of the Western European continent; the newborn Wehrmacht grew up and established itself in the status of the most combat-ready army in the world. Raw materials and food resources of the occupied and subject countries (including Romanian oil)

reduced the degree of Hitler's dependence on Stalin's costly favors. Strange, but the Soviet foreign policy department did not want to see and evaluate these changes. In a qualitatively new situation, it continued to "twist its line" with the grace of an elephant in a china shop. It is even more strange (or, on the contrary, natural?) that the first conflicts were caused not by quarrels over mining on a geopolitical scale, but by completely petty redneck.

At the end of June 1940, Moscow announced its claims to the territory of Bukovina (the region bordering Ukraine in northern Romania in the upper reaches of the Prut River). Before the outbreak of World War I, this territory was part of the Habsburg Empire (Austria-Hungary), and not a word was said about it in the Secret Soviet-German Protocol on the division of spheres of influence in Eastern Europe of August 23, 1939. After a short, but by no means friendly discussion, the parties agreed that the Soviet Union limited its claims only to the northern part of Bukovina (the Chernivtsi region of modern Ukraine). In exchange for this "concession", Germany officially, through its ambassador in Bucharest, offered the Romanian government *"to yield to the demands of the Soviet government in order to avoid a war between Romania and the Soviet Union"* (70, p. 64). For its part, Moscow promised to take into account the German concern about the fate of ethnic Germans, who lived in numbers of more than 100 thousand people in the territory of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina.

The interests of the Carpathian peasants of German origin, the head of the government of the USSR Molotov "took into account" as follows. A lengthy, multi-page document was drawn up, in which, indicating the exact number of pocket and wrist watches, "fur hats and coats" (new - separately, used - separately), it was determined what a German family could take with them, which they were generously allowed to leave house and economy created by the labor of many generations and leave the USSR. Tobacco, which was grown as a commercial crop in Bukovina, was not forgotten either. No more than 20 kg were allowed per family (113). It is difficult to understand for what purpose it was necessary to take away a bag of tobacco from a peasant. Comrade Stalin, as everyone knows, smoked "Herzegovina-Flor" and did not need a village "self-garden". But

it is not at all difficult to imagine how such rudeness affected Hitler, in whose speeches (and perhaps in his thoughts) the fate of the Volksdeutsche living in Eastern Europe was present

constantly...

Further more. If the property of the Bukovinian peasants was calculated in hats and "onion" watches, then in the Baltic States the value of enterprises owned by Germans (including Germans - citizens of Germany) amounted to hundreds of millions of marks. In connection with the "profound socio-economic transformations" that had begun in the Baltic countries, on July 29, 1940, Molotov assured the German ambassador that *"the Soviet government assumes responsibility for the activities carried out by the governments of the Baltic countries and for protecting German interests in them ... Soviet The government recommended that the Lithuanian government make an exception from the nationalization law for persons of German origin, both Lithuanian and German citizenship, and suspend the nationalization of their property so that all property issues can be settled directly between Berlin and Moscow. This settlement of property issues between Moscow and Berlin applies equally to Estonia and Latvia..."* (120, p. 137) After hearing this, Schulenburg was full of gratitude for a long time. On October 17, 1940, the German ambassador in Moscow had to hear something

new:

*"... tov. Molotov answers Schulenburg that the Soviet government declared a benevolent attitude towards Germany's interests in the Baltic states, but never undertook the obligation to **fully compensate** (emphasis added by me. - M.S.) property to German citizens ... As for nationalization, then its implementation in relation to Germans and persons of German nationality in the Baltics were **postponed, but not canceled**, about which the German government was also promptly and accurately informed ... "* (120, p. 304). Another discussion of the amount of "incomplete compensation"

took place, by a strange coincidence, also on November 25, 1940:

"... tov. Molotov points out that this is the first exception that the Soviet side made from the principles of not compensating for nationalized property ... In this regard, Comrade Molotov makes

the following proposal: if paid within one year, increase the compensation for the property of persons of German nationality from 10 to 15% and of German citizens from 20 to 25%. Accordingly, for persons of German nationality when paying for 3 years - 25% instead of 15%, 6 years - 35% instead of 20%, 10 years 40% instead of 25% ... com. Molotov again emphasizes that it is impossible to compensate for such an amount in one year (it turned out to be possible to confiscate property in one day. - M.S.), and that there is no such precedent in history ... ” (120, pp. 412–413).

The culmination of the aggravation of Soviet-German relations in the autumn of 1940 was the so-called second Vienna Arbitration and the conflict around it. On August 30, 1940, the centuries-old dispute over Transylvania was “resolved” in Vienna in one day. Under pressure from Germany and Italy, the Romanian leadership agreed to transfer the northern part of Transylvania (43.5 thousand square kilometers with a population of 2.5 million people) to Hungary. In exchange for his compliance, Marshal Antonescu received from the Axis countries official guarantees of the inviolability of the remaining territory of Romania. As a result of such a deal, Hungary (the future and, as it turned out, Hitler's most reliable ally) received a generous “advance”, and a weakened and humiliated Romania found itself even more tightly fastened to

the chariot of the fascist bloc. The Soviet leadership immediately expressed its strongest protest. The very next day, August 31, 1940, Molotov told Schulenburg that *“The German government violated Article 3 of the Non-Aggression Treaty of 08/23/1939, which refers to consultations on issues of interest to both sides.*

The German government violated this article by not consulting with the Soviet government on a question that cannot but affect the interests of the USSR, since the matter concerns two states bordering the Soviet Union” (120, p. 205). On September 9, 1940, Molotov explained to Schulenburg more specifically what the “interests of the USSR” violated by the Vienna Agreement were. Of course, the problem was not that the castle of the legendary Transylvanian vampire Dracula once again “changed its residence permit” - from Hungarian to Romanian.

*"Tov. Molotov told Schulenburg that ... The Soviet government, going towards the German government, reduced its claims to Romania and limited them in relation to Bukovina only to its northern part. But then Comrade. Molotov stated that when **the question of Southern Bukovina** is raised under appropriate conditions , we hope that the German government will support us in this matter. **The provision of guarantees to Romania** (here and above, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) is also at odds with this wish of the Soviet government " (120, p. 220).*

And that is not all. On September 21, Molotov summoned Schulenburg and handed him "a memorandum regarding non-compliance by the German government with Article III of the Non-Aggression Pact." Despite the fact that this time Moscow's claims were expressed in writing, it became even more difficult to understand the position of the Soviet leadership.

more difficult:

*"... The Soviet government also cannot but pay attention to the fact that **by giving guarantees to Romania regarding its state territory, it was given reason to assert that this act of the German government was directed against the USSR**. As is well known, such assertions have indeed gained considerable currency. Meanwhile, if the German government had previously asked the Government of the USSR on this issue, then there would have been no grounds for spreading such assertions, and at the same time the German government would have been completely **convinced that the USSR was not going to threaten** (here and above it is highlighted by me. - M.S. .) the territorial integrity of Romania (120, pp. 266–267).*

If we understand all this directly and simply (as it is written), then it turns out that the scandal that dragged on for almost a month - and not just a scandal, but an official accusation of violating the Non-Aggression Pact - was caused only by the fact that Berlin did not ask in advance consent of Moscow. And no more. The Soviet Union, it turns out, was not going to "threaten the territorial integrity of Romania" - but the guarantees of this immunity given by Germany and Italy, for some reason, caused an uproar.

Completely bewildered, Schulenburg began to babble something completely already disconnected:

"... Schulenburg says that from the very beginning (since August 1939) of the resolution of the Bessarabian issue, the impression was that the USSR had no claims against Romania ... As for Southern Bukovina, it may be his fault that he did not quite understand posing the question. Tov.

Molotov repeats what he already said to Schulenburg about Southern Bukovina, adding that he said it in an indefinite form and, perhaps, that Schulenburg did not attach due importance to what was said at that time. Schulenburg says that he

is very sorry that these differences have arisen between the Soviet and German governments ... and he will do everything to clarify this issue. Tov. Molotov declares that if for Germany Article III of the

Non-Aggression Treaty presents inconvenience and embarrassment, then the Soviet government is ready to discuss the question of changing or canceling this article of the Treaty, but so far it exists ...

Schulenburg hurriedly says that this is an accident and that there can be no question of this ... " (120, p. 264)"

Accident "was further developed. On November 13, 1940, during negotiations with Hitler in Berlin, Molotov again returned to the Romanian question:

*"... As for Bukovina, although this was not provided for in the additional protocol, the USSR **made a concession to Germany and temporarily abandoned Southern Bukovina**, confining itself to Northern Bukovina, but at the same time made its reservation that the USSR hoped that Germany would take into account the interest in due time Soviet Union in Southern Bukovina. The USSR has not yet received a negative response from Germany to its expressed wish, but Germany, instead of such a response, **guaranteed the entire territory of Romania, forgetting about our indicated interest** (here and above, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) and generally giving these guarantees without consultation with the USSR and in violation of the interests of the USSR" (120, p. 378).*

From the new Soviet-Romanian border to the center the oil-producing region of Ploiesti was only 200 km away.

Unlike the elderly Count Schulenburg, Hitler assessed the situation adequately:

“... The Fuhrer replied that if only part of Bukovina remains with Russia, then this will also be a significant concession from Germany. In accordance with the oral agreement, the former Austrian territory should enter the German sphere of influence. In addition, the territories included in the Russian zone were named by name, for example, Bessarabia. Regarding Bukovina, not a single word was said in the agreement ... In order for German-Russian cooperation to bring positive results in the future, the Soviet government must understand that Germany is involved in a struggle for life and death, which under all circumstances must be brought to successful end. The number of prerequisites necessary for this, depending on economic and military factors, Germany wants to secure for itself by any means...” (70, p. 113)

We have cited these facts, which at first glance do not have a direct relationship to the Soviet-Finnish confrontation in 1940, in order to make clearer the military-political context in which the leadership of Nazi Germany turned its interested look at Finland at the end of the summer of 1940 . In the presentation of Marshal

Mannerheim, the events developed as follows: *“On August 17, 1940, I received a*

telegram from the Ambassador of Finland in Berlin in which I was asked ... to receive the German lieutenant colonel Veltjens, who was instructed to convey the message of Reichsmarschall Goering ... Veltjens on the same evening (August 18) visited me at home and conveyed Goering's greetings. He asked if Finland, following the example of Sweden, would like to allow the transportation of German household goods through its territory, as well as the passage of vacationers and the sick to Kirkenes (a port in northern Norway). In addition, Veltjens said that we would now have the opportunity to receive military equipment from Germany ... When I visited Ryti in the evening of the same day (August 19) , the acting president instructed me to give the Reichsmarschall, through his envoy, a positive answer to the question of through transportation. This is what I told Veltjens when he came to me the next morning ...

The military authorities of both states considered private issues of transportation of equipment, patients and vacationers, and these negotiations ended with a technical agreement signed on September 12. After negotiations were held on this issue by representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs, on the 22nd of the same month a formal agreement was signed" (22, pp. 357–358).

Formally, legally, the transit of military cargo and military personnel (even if they are called "sick and vacationers") through the territory of Finland meant Germany's intervention in the sphere of interests of the USSR, recorded in the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939. Formally, legally, the transit of military cargo and military personnel is incompatible with the most strict interpretation of the concept of "neutrality". This is just as true as the fact that the provision by the Soviet Union of a naval base on the Kola Peninsula at the disposal of the German Navy was incompatible with the officially declared neutrality of the USSR in the outbreak of the world war, and signed on July 22 (i.e., a month before the start of negotiations on German transit), the agreement on the transit of weapons and military units of the Red Army through the territory of Finland in Hanko (and the very fact of the existence of a Soviet military base on Finnish territory!) undermined the neutral status of this country. Other similar conclusions can be cited, but it is unlikely that there will be at least a shred of common sense in this. The policy of the two dictators - starting with the conclusion of an absolutely illegal deal on the division of the territories of sovereign European countries into "spheres of interest" and ending with the invasion of German and Soviet troops into Norway and Finland - has gone so far beyond the boundaries of any "legal field" that legal chicanery becomes in this context completely pointless. Much more meaningful is the analysis of the practical actions of the parties, the motives for these actions and their consequences.

The problem of supplying the grouping of German troops in Norway really existed. Under the conditions of British domination of the sea, the "geometrically shortest" route from German ports to Norwegian ports through the North Sea was too dangerous. In this sense, the use of the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia greatly simplified the task. On the other hand, the Gulf of Bothnia has two shores

(Swedish and Finnish), and there is no direct railway line to Kirkenes in either Swedish or Finnish territory. In the presence of an agreement on transit with Sweden (it was concluded in July 1940), transit through Finland became a useful addition and prudent duplication of already existing transport routes. The stock, as they say, "does not pull the pocket", and by organizing another transport corridor, the Germans made the position of their troops in Norway more stable. At the same time, it seems quite

reasonable to assume that the desire to support Finland, which was balancing on the edge of the abyss, was no less a weighty motive for the actions of the German leadership than the purely pragmatic interest in obtaining another transport corridor to supply the Norwegian group. Of course, the desire to prevent the final absorption of Finland by the Soviet Union was not caused by an altruistic sense of solidarity. Hitler could not but understand that any appearance of German soldiers or military supplies in the territory assigned to the "sphere of interest" of the Soviet Union would cause an extremely negative reaction in Moscow. An equally sharp (and easily predictable) reaction should have been caused by the proposal to "pay" (in every sense of the word) for Finland's consent to transit with arms supplies from Germany (or through Germany). And if Hitler went for all this, it means that he had serious reasons to strive to preserve Finnish independence. One of the most important was the Petsamo nickel.

Nickel is the most important alloying element in the production of high-strength structural steels, and in the composition of stainless and heat-resistant alloys, the mass fraction of nickel is in the range from 10 to 60%. Translated into the language of military technology of the mid-20th century, nickel means airplanes and aircraft engines, i.e., precisely those types of weapons in which Germany sought (and very successfully) for world leadership. There are few nickel deposits in Europe, there are actually two large ones: Petsamo (now Pechenga) and Norilsk. The struggle around the nickel enterprises of Petsamo, either fading away or approaching a direct armed clash, continued for almost the entire period of the "peaceful respite" (from the spring of 1940 to the spring of 1941). We recall once again that in March 1940, with

By the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty, Petsamo turned out to be the only (!) point on the map where the Soviet Union not only did not move the border line further than the Red Army actually advanced, but, on the contrary, returned what was captured. Let us repeat the generally accepted version of the reasons for such "conscientiousness": the concession to develop the Petsamo nickel deposits belonged to a British (Canadian) company, and Stalin decided at that moment not to aggravate already tense relations with the West.

After the defeat of France in the summer of 1940, Stalin decided that Britain, besieged on his island, could no longer stand on ceremony. At the same moment, Hitler came to a similar assumption. As a result, two interconnected events occurred almost simultaneously. On June 23, 1940, the Soviet Union demanded that the Finnish government break the concession agreement with the British firm and transfer nickel mines to the USSR or a joint Soviet-Finnish enterprise. The Finns refused, arguing their refusal with the right and generally accepted norms of business relations, which do not allow terminating the contract with the former concessionaires, who had already invested huge amounts of money in Petsamo. On the other hand, Finland expressed its readiness to supply the USSR with 50% of all mined nickel. Moscow disagreed and continued to push for control of the mines. In the meantime, on July 27, 1940, the German industrial giant I.G. Farbenindustrie signed a contract to purchase 60% of all nickel ore mined in Petsamo. From that moment on, Germany became directly interested in maintaining the independence and stability of Finland, whose government acted as a guarantor of the contract. As for the plans and hopes for the future German-Finnish military cooperation, it is not possible to confirm or exclude the presence of such thoughts in

anyone's head. The facts are that in August 1940 Germany launched a grandiose air offensive ("Battle for Britain") and was quite actively preparing for a possible "jump" of ground forces across the English Channel. The alliance of Germany with the USSR by that time had already begun to show the first cracks, but before the planning of the joint offensive of the Finnish and

German troops on Kandalaksha were still infinitely far away. In any case, **the transfer of several German anti-aircraft batteries through the territory of Finland to Kirkenes did not change anything in the situation either at the strategic (it is generally absurd to argue about**

this) or at the tactical level. Moscow's reaction to Germany's sudden interest in Finnish affairs turned out to be completely inadequate. **It was this inadequacy of the Soviet reaction** (and not the German-Finnish agreement on transit in itself) that helped Finland not to appear in the autumn of 1940 on the list of the Baltic countries that *"thrown off the hated bourgeois regimes."* The "vigilance" that went beyond all reasonable limits and the almost pathological "mania of persecution" that tormented the Kremlin rulers led to the fact that they saw in the transit agreement almost a military alliance between Germany and Finland. In addition, the official message about the beginning of the transit was received by the Soviet leadership under rather strange

circumstances. On September 16, Ambassador Schulenburg was instructed from Berlin to visit Molotov on the afternoon of September 21 (that is, the day before the actual transport began) and - *" unless you receive other instructions by then"* - to inform him of the following:

"The continued penetration of British aircraft into the airspace of Germany and the territories occupied by it makes it necessary to strengthen the defense of some objects, primarily in the north of Norway. Part of this reinforcement is the transfer of an anti-aircraft artillery battalion there, along with its support. When searching for transfer routes, it turned out that the least difficult route for this purpose would be through Finland. The division will presumably be unloaded on September 22 near Haparanda, and then transported to Norway, partly by rail, partly by highway. The Finnish government, taking into account the special circumstances, allowed Germany this transportation. We want to inform the Soviet government in advance about this step" (70, p. 78). On September 21, Schulenburg visited Molotov, but the

entire meeting turned out to be devoted to a "showdown" on the Romanian issue. The message about German transit through Finland was never

sounded. Why? Schulenburg received "other instructions"? Or forgot the ones available under the pressure of an angry Molotov? We don't have answers to these questions. Be that as it may, the exchange of information on the issue of transit did not take place until 26 September. Schulenburg was in Berlin, and the interests of Germany in Moscow were represented by Chargé d'Affaires Toppelskirch, who the day before received instructions from Ribbentrop to inform Molotov about the signing of the Tripartite Pact (Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis) scheduled for September 27. There was nothing pleasant in this message for Molotov. In combination with such deafening news, the message about the beginning of military transit through Finland - and even received by Moscow not through normal diplomatic channels, but from newspapers - should have left an impression on Molotov of an ominous "encirclement".

"... tov. Molotov tells Toppelskirch that he is still interested in such a question. According to the latest reports from Berlin, some kind of treaty has been concluded with Finland on a military issue. There are no messages from the German government yet. Tov. Molotov asked Toppelskirch if he had any confirmation. Toppelskirch replied that he knew nothing. Then

tov. Molotov outlined the content of the telegram of the Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Germany Comrade. Shkvtartsev about a press conference on September 25 at the German Foreign Ministry, where head. Schmidt, the press department, announced that a communiqué of the Finnish government had been published on the signing of a German-Finnish agreement on the transit of German troops through Finland to Norway. In addition, a bulletin is distributed in Berlin by the United Press agency, which reports on the landing of German troops on September 24 in the Finnish port of Vaasa and that the senior officers who arrived with the troops were accommodated in Vaasa hotels. Toppelskirch again replied that he knew nothing about this issue.

Tov. Molotov declared that he had information about the landing of German troops in Finland in the cities of Vaasa, Uleaborg and Pori, and again asked if Toppelskirch knew this.

Tippelskirch replied that he had heard about it from journalists, but he knows no more.

Tov. Molotov said that, apparently, some kind of treaty was also concluded with Finland, and the Soviet government wants to receive information about this treaty, about its goals, as well as its full text and additional secret articles, if any ... "(120, p . 273) Probably, Comrade Molotov did

not even allow the thought that "the highest officers were accommodated in the hotels of Vaaz" simply in order to get enough sleep and rest after a tiring sea voyage (Molotov and his Boss did not stand on ceremony with their "officers"). In the mind inflamed with eternal suspicion, the cockroaches grew to the size of elephants, and the unknown provincial hotel turned to the "headquarters of the Wehrmacht army group" in Finland. This is how Fate once again took pity on the people of Suomi. Stalin's excessive caution and exceptional restraint (the reader is free to

substitute other words) saved Finland. Far from giving up their "rights" stipulated by the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939, the Kremlin authorities decided **to obtain additional confirmation of these rights from Hitler before embarking on a military solution to the "Finnish question"**. Is it necessary to prove that in a gambling game with a Berlin swindler such tactics could not but lead to a shameful embarrassment?

If August 1939 can be considered the "finest hour" of Stalinist diplomacy, then Molotov's November (1940) visit to Berlin was probably the biggest failure. To tell the truth, the situation has become incomparably more

complicated. In August 1939, "all the cards" were in the hands of Stalin. He had the largest land army in the world, the largest combat aircraft, huge herds of tanks (outnumbering the tank forces of all European countries combined). The fact that the real combat effectiveness of this steel armada, to put it mildly, does not correspond to its size, in August 1939, no one could know for sure. Moreover, on the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War, "lungs

German tanks in the fight against republican (i.e., Soviet) cannon tanks were not comparable and were shot mercilessly, ” and this, presumably, was noticed not only by the future head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army, General of the Army Pavlov (whose words we quoted above), but also German military specialists.

In the summer of 1939, Hitler had the imprudence (if not to say stupidity) to declare publicly his desire to deal with Poland. Thus, the success (or failure) of the Polish campaign - the first major operation of the newborn Wehrmacht - turned out to be inextricably linked with Hitler's personal authority and his claims to be the "chosen of Providence." It turned out to be easier said than done. By August 16 (beginning from that day, Berlin literally bombarded Molotov with telegrams with a request to receive Ribbentrop) the summer was almost over, there was no more than a month left before the start of the autumn thaw, and all conceivable dates for the outbreak of hostilities were coming to an end. Poland

same ones received "guarantees" of the inviolability of their borders from France and England, and Comrade Stalin mysteriously smoked his famous pipe. On August 14, the Pravda newspaper (the official, mind you, the press organ of the party of which Stalin himself was the General Secretary) wrote:

“The policy of peace does not at all mean concessions to the aggressors, concessions that only whet the predatory appetites of the invaders... The Bolsheviks are not pacifists. The real defense of peace does not consist in concessions to the aggressor, but in a double blow against the blow

of the warmongers...” And how were such words to be understood? Didn't they mean the readiness of one or two million Soviet "volunteers" at the first call of the party and government to come to the aid of the working people of fraternal Poland? Yes, pre-war relations Soviet-Polish outwardly were very far from friendship, but the Soviet-German outwardly looked even worse. *“The culprits and instigators of the second imperialist war are present. This is fascism – a criminal and dirty offspring of post-war imperialism.”* These words on July 31, 1939, Pravda did not write about Poland at all ...

In August 1939, Stalin could have pardoned Hitler, or he could have killed him. And it is no coincidence that on August 21, while waiting for a response from Moscow, Hitler rushed around the office like a hunted animal. At that moment, he was ready to give Stalin even more than Stalin was ready to demand. And this is by no means "artistic hyperbole." On June 24, 1940, at the time of the aggravation of the conflict over Bessarabia and Bukovina, Ribbentrop prepared a memorandum in which he reminded Hitler of the following circumstances of the Moscow negotiations in August 1939 : *Constantinople and the Straits, if necessary. The latter, however, was not discussed*" (70, p. 59).

Up to Constantinople and the Straits! Moscow tsars

could only dream of...

In November 1940, friendship with Stalin was no longer a matter of life and death for Hitler. Parenthetically, we note that subsequent events showed with obvious clarity that Germany could fight without Soviet oil (moreover, even against Soviet oil, which set in motion tens of thousands of tanks and aircraft of the Red Army). Accordingly, Hitler's attitude towards his Moscow partner also changed: from the hysterical "at any cost" in Berlin, they switched to a captious calculation of the "profit and loss" that the alliance with Stalin brings them. In any case, Hitler no longer wanted to pay further (to pay for the territories conquered by the power of German weapons, to pay with deliveries of the latest models of military equipment and industrial equipment) for the mere non-interference of the Soviet Union in the affairs of Western Europe.

In this qualitatively new situation, Moscow probably had to make a new Big Decision. It was necessary to decide: **with whom and against whom the Soviet Union intended to end the world war.** In other words: either enter into a full-fledged military alliance with Germany and jointly defeat the British Empire "in heaven, on earth and at sea" - and after that claim and receive your share in the colossal "British inheritance". Or again call Hitler "a criminal and dirty offspring of imperialism" and with the words "our cause is just, the enemy will be defeated, victory will be ours" to deal a crushing blow to the then

almost defenseless (on October 1, about 30 Wehrmacht divisions were concentrated near the borders of the USSR) eastern borders of the "Third Reich".

Alas, the Moscow dictator turned out to be too small for Big Decisions. The grand deal between the two tyrants did not take place.

Fortunately for mankind - and to a bitter misfortune for his subjects - in November 1940, Stalin took the first step towards the catastrophe of June 1941. Molotov was sent to Berlin with a whole heap of claims, petty grievances, paranoid suspicions. Stalin clearly expressed his desire to loot in war-weakened South Eastern Europe, without offering Hitler anything substantial in return. In the instructions of Stalin personally recorded by Molotov (Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, f.36, on. 1, d. 1161, l. 147-155), the goals of the Berlin meeting were defined as follows:

"1. Purpose of the

trip a) Find out the real intentions of Germany and all the parties to the Pact 3... the prospects for other countries to join the Pact 3; the place of the USSR in these plans at the present moment and in the future; b) prepare an initial outline

of the sphere of interests of the USSR in Europe, as well as in near and middle Asia ...

2. Based on the fact that the Soviet-German agreement on the partial delimitation of the spheres of interests of the USSR and Germany has been exhausted by events (with the exception of Finland), in the negotiations to seek to include in the sphere of interests of the USSR:

a) Finland - on the basis of the Soviet-German agreement of 1939, in the implementation of which Germany must eliminate all difficulties and ambiguities (the withdrawal of German troops, the cessation of all political demonstrations in Finland and Germany aimed at harming the interests of the USSR); b) Danube, in the

part of the Sea Danube, in accordance with the directives of Comrade Sobolev. To also say about our dissatisfaction with the fact that Germany did not consult with the USSR on the question of guarantees and the introduction of troops into Romania; c) Bulgaria - the

main issue of the negotiations - should be, by agreement with Germany and Italy, assigned to the sphere of interests of the USSR on the same basis of guarantees to Bulgaria from the USSR, as

*this was done by Germany and Italy in relation to Romania, **with the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgaria*** (highlighted by

me. - M.S.); d) *The question of Turkey and its fate cannot be resolved without our participation, since we have*

serious interests in Turkey. e) The question of the future fate of Rumania and Hungary, as bordering on the USSR, interests us very much, and we would like

to have an agreement on this with us; f) The question of Iran cannot be resolved without the participation of the USSR, since we have serious interests

there. Don't talk about it without need..." (120, pp. 350–351)

Then there were four more sub-items (g, h, i, k) with less significant questions, then several information plan items. So for what, for what services, Hitler had to cede Bulgaria to the Kremlin extortionist this time (the "main issue of negotiations"!), Take into account Stalin's "interests" in Turkey, Iran, Hungary and Romania? In paragraph 13, another Soviet proposal was noted on "compensation" (or rather, on the procedure and conditions for confiscation) of the property of German subjects in the Baltic States (" 25% in one year, 50% in three years in equal shares") (120 , p. 352). Perhaps the only point in which there was some reciprocity of services was point 10:

"10. Offer to make a peaceful action in the form of an open declaration of 4 powers (if a favorable course of the main negotiations turns out: Bulgaria, Turkey, etc.) on the terms of maintaining the British Empire (without mandated territories) with all those possessions that England now owns and on condition of its non-intervention in the affairs of Europe and the immediate withdrawal from Gibraltar and Egypt, as well as the obligation to immediately return to Germany the former colonies and the immediate granting of dominion rights to India " (120, p. 352). Thus, in exchange for

a significant expansion of the "sphere of interest" of the USSR in South-Eastern Europe ("*with the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgaria*"), Stalin promised to sign another paper with demands and threats against Great Britain, and even return half in three years (!) the value of property confiscated in the Baltic States ...

The real outcome of the negotiations in Berlin turned out to be even more inconclusive than might be expected, judging by the completely inadequate instructions to Molotov. The first conversation with Hitler, which lasted, taking into account the translation time of 2.5 hours, took place on November 12, 1940. For the most part, it consisted of a lengthy monologue by Hitler, in which he assured his guest that England had actually already been defeated (and only due to Churchill's extreme "amateurishness" she has not yet understood this) and the longed-for moment of dividing up the huge "heritage" of the British Empire is approaching. From the Soviet Union, Hitler did not ask for anything other than non-intervention, promising to later take it as a share and give, for example, India and ice-free ports in the Indian Ocean.

Late in the evening of the same day, a coded telegram with a report on the conversation flew to Moscow: "... Our

*preliminary discussion in Moscow correctly highlighted the issues that I encountered here. While I'm trying to get information and probe partners. Their answers in conversation are not always clear and require further clarification. Hitler's great interest in negotiating and strengthening friendship with the USSR on spheres of influence is evident. Also noticeable is the desire to push us against Turkey, from which Ribbentrop wants only absolute neutrality. **For now, they keep silent about Finland, but I will make them talk about it*** (emphasis added by me. - M.S.). *I ask for instructions. Molotov*" (120, p. 370).

On the morning of November 13, a reply cipher flew from Moscow to Berlin: "*For Molotov from the Instance. We consider your behavior in the negotiations to be correct*" (120, p. 375). It's funny that the mysterious "Instance" called himself in the plural ("we believe"), and addressed the head of the government of the USSR with "you" ("your behavior"). However, the expression "**strengthen friendship about spheres of influence**" should rightfully take a place in the annals of belles-lettres...

It can be assumed that, having received the approval of his actions from Stalin, Molotov, with redoubled energy, went to a meeting with Hitler in order to make him "talk about Finland." And this task turned out to be fulfilled and even exceeded - most of the second (and last in history) conversation between Molotov and Hitler turned out to be devoted not to the issues of dividing the Indian Ocean,

the Black Sea straits, Egypt, Iran and Gibraltar, and the small, but so much irritating to Moscow, Finland. This conversation took place in the style of a "dialogue of two deaf people." With the monotony of a jammed gramophone record, Molotov repeated two theses over and over again: Finland was included in the Soviet "sphere of interest", and therefore the USSR had the right to immediately begin "solving the Finnish problem." Hitler, more and more irritated, replied that there were no German troops in Finland, the transit would soon end, but Germany would not tolerate a new war in the Baltic Sea area. One of the "coils" of this tedious squabble looked like this:

*"... Molotov continues that with regard to Finland, he believes that clarifying this issue is his first duty; this does not require a new agreement, but should only adhere to what has been established, i.e., that Finland should be the area of Soviet interests. This is of particular importance now that there is a war going on. The Soviet Union, although it did not participate in the big war, nevertheless **fought against Poland, against Finland and was completely ready, if necessary, for a war for Bessarabia** (here and below it is highlighted by me. - M.S.). If the German point of view on this matter had changed, he would like clarity on the matter. Hitler states that Germany's position on the matter has not changed, but*

*he only does not want a war in the Baltic Sea. In addition, Germany is interested in Finland only as a supplier of timber and nickel. Germany cannot tolerate war there now, but believes that this is the area of Russia's interests. The same applies to Rumania, from where Germany receives oil; there, too, war is unacceptable. If we move on to more important questions, Hitler says, then this question will be irrelevant. Finland will not leave the Soviet Union. Hitler then asks **if the Soviet Union intends to wage war in Finland?** He considers this a significant issue. Molotov replies that **if the Government of Finland abandons its dual policy and incitement of the masses against the USSR, then everything will go fine..**" (120, p. 379)*

Hitler did not know Russian, but he understood the Soviet newspeak quite well. He perfectly understood the meaning of Molotov's answer,

after which he tried to scare Molotov with the difficulties of a new Finnish war:
“... *Hitler says*

that one should take into account those circumstances that might not have occurred in other areas. One may have military possibilities, but the conditions of the terrain are such that the war will not be quickly ended. If there is a prolonged resistance, then this may assist in the creation of strong British bases. Then Germany herself will have to intervene in this matter, which is undesirable for her. He wouldn't have said that if Russia really had a reason to be offended by Germany. After the end of the war, Russia can get everything she wants ...

Molotov makes the remark that words do not always correspond to deeds. It is in the interests of both countries that there be peace in the Baltic Sea, and if the question of Finland is resolved in accordance with last year's agreement, then everything will go very well and normally. If, however, a reservation is allowed to postpone this issue until the end of the war, this will mean a violation or change of last year's agreement ... Hitler claims that this will not be a violation of the

agreement, because Germany only does not want war in the Baltic Sea. If there is a war, then relations between Germany and the Soviet Union will be complicated and difficult, and further great joint work will be difficult ...

Molotov believes that this is not about a war in the Baltic Sea, but about the Finnish question, which should be resolved on the basis of last year's agreement. Hitler remarks

that this agreement had
it was established that Finland belongs to the sphere of interests of Russia.

Molotov asks: "In the same position as, for example, Estonia and Bessarabia?" (120, p. 380) In the German

version of the minutes of the conversation, this moment is recorded as follows: "... Molotov

*replied that the matter was not in the question of the war in the Baltic, but in resolving the Finnish problem within the framework of the agreement last year. Answering the Fuhrer's question, he stated that **he envisions a settlement within the same framework as in Bessarabia and neighboring countries** (emphasis mine. - M.S.)" (70, p. 115).*

It is noteworthy that neither Hitler nor Molotov even **considered it necessary to mention the peace treaty between the USSR and Finland**, concluded on March 12, 1940. But what's so surprising about that? Authoritative godfathers gathered for a specific bazaar, it's somehow not customary to talk about worthless pieces of paper signed with suckers at such summits ...

At two in the morning on November 14, 1940, the following telephone

message went to Moscow: *"Stalin. Today, November 13, a conversation with Hitler took place for three and a half hours and after dinner, in addition to the program talks, a three-hour conversation with Ribbentrop ... Both conversations did not give the desired results. **The main time with Hitler was spent on the Finnish question** (emphasis mine. - M.S.). Hitler said that he confirms last year's agreement, but Germany says that it is interested in maintaining peace in the Baltic Sea. My indication that last year no reservations were made on this issue was not refuted, but it had no effect either ... These are the main results. There is nothing to brag about, but at least it revealed Hitler's current moods, which will have to be reckoned with "* (120, pp. 394-395).

The two documents dated November 25, 1940, which were discussed above, testify to exactly how the Kremlin decided to "reckon with Hitler's opinion". In exchange for a military base on the Dardanelles, a "mutual assistance agreement" with Bulgaria, and recognition of the Persian Gulf region as "the center of the USSR's territorial aspirations," Moscow promised to " *ensure peaceful relations with Finland.* " On the same day, November 25, the command of the Leningrad Military District received a directive from the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR with an order to start developing an operational plan for a military operation aimed at defeating the Finnish army and completely occupying the country "on the 45th day of the operation", and the development of the plan should have been *completed* by a very definite date - by F

Chapter

2.6 The Last Months of Peace

The content of Molotov's many hours of exhausting conversations in Berlin can be briefly and accurately expressed in five words: whoever did not have time, he was late. What Stalin managed to get his hands on in Eastern Europe from September 1939 to September 1940 was left to him. Hitler did not agree to any new advances of the USSR to the west (southwest, northwest). Notwithstanding the text of the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939, and any possible interpretations of this text. From that moment (since November 1940), Soviet-Finnish relations were so tightly integrated into the general context of big European politics that it became impossible to study and describe them in isolation.

It is generally accepted that there was no response to the Soviet proposals of November 25, 1940 (on the conditions for the USSR to join the "Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis"). This is not entirely true, or rather, not at all. The first "response" in a row was the deafening silence of Berlin, which in fact refused to even begin discussing these conditions. It is worth noting that on January 17, 1941, Molotov found it possible to express to Ambassador Schulenburg his "diplomatic bewilderment" at the absence of any reaction from Berlin to the Soviet proposals, but this did not change anything either. The second, incomparably more significant "answer" was the official accession of Bulgaria to the "axis" (March 1, 1941) and the entry of German troops into its territory. This happened despite repeated statements by the USSR government that *"it would consider the appearance of any foreign troops on the territory of Bulgaria or in the Straits as a violation of the security interests of the USSR"* (70, p. 144). On the same day, March 1, 1941, Molotov handed Schulenburg a note reading as follows:

"1. It is very unfortunate that, despite the warning from the Soviet government in its demarche of November 25, 1940, the German government found it possible to take the path

violation of the security interests of the USSR and decided to occupy Bulgaria

with troops. 2. In view of the fact that the Soviet government remains on the basis of its November 25 demarche, the German government must understand that it cannot count on the support of the USSR for its actions in Bulgaria" (120, p. 706).

The meaning and intonation, as we see, are completely new - and after all, less than a year ago, every new step of Nazi aggression was met in Moscow with the wishes of *"the complete victory of Germany in its defensive*

measures ..." The culmination of the Soviet-German confrontation in the Balkans were the first days of April 1941.

Let us briefly recall the main outline of events. After Bulgaria, under pressure from Berlin, joined the Axis, it was the turn of Yugoslavia, whose government on March 25 signed a protocol in Vienna on joining the Tripartite Alliance. However, already on the night of March 26-27, a military coup took place in Belgrade. The new government of General Simovich announced its intention to give a firm rebuff to German claims and turned to the Soviet Union for help. On April 3 (i.e., just a week after the coup), the Yugoslav delegation was already negotiating in Moscow on the conclusion of a friendship treaty and had a meeting with Stalin himself. Despite the fact that Germany, through Ambassador Schulenburg, brought to the attention of Molotov its opinion that *"the moment for concluding an agreement with Yugoslavia was chosen unsuccessfully and causes an undesirable impression"*, at 2:30 am on April 6, 1941, the Soviet-Yugoslav agreement was signed. Article 2 of the Treaty read: *"If one of the Contracting*

Parties is attacked by a third state, the other Contracting Party undertakes to observe the policy of friendly relations towards it" (121, p. 48). Moreover, the opinion of the government of the USSR was brought to the attention of the Yugoslav delegation that *"we are not opposed to Yugoslavia drawing closer to England and to all those states that can help Yugoslavia, we do not at all exclude the possibility that Yugoslavia will conclude an agreement with England. We would even consider it expedient"* (121, p. 50).

A few hours after the signing of the Treaty, Luftwaffe aircraft subjected Belgrade to a fierce bombardment, and German troops invaded Yugoslav territory. The Soviet Union limited the promised "policy of friendly relations" with Yugoslavia to the fact that on April 6, at 4 pm Moscow time, Molotov received Schulenburg and, after hearing the official report of the Wehrmacht's invasion of Yugoslavia, limited himself to a melancholic remark: "It is extremely sad that , despite all efforts, the expansion of the war thus proved inevitable." It turned out to be inevitable... And that's all. The discouraged Schulenburg reported to Berlin: "Molotov did not take the opportunity to mention the Soviet-Yugoslav pact. According to the instructions, I also did not raise this issue" (70, p. 156). What was behind these strange actions of Stalinist diplomacy?

Why was it so defiantly "teasing" Hitler, not having the desire (and the practical possibility) to provide Yugoslavia with effective military assistance? Why was it necessary to demonstrate to the whole world that the Soviet promises of

"friendly relations" are worth even less than the notorious Anglo-French "guarantees"? In any case, Moscow's April demarche was received with extreme irritation in Berlin. Later (June 22, 1941), it was the events of April 5-6 that were used in the German memorandum declaring war on the Soviet Union as the main evidence of the hostile policy that the Soviet Union pursued against Germany ("With the conclusion of the Soviet-Yugoslav friendship treaty, which strengthened the rear Belgrade conspirators, the USSR joined the common Anglo-Greek front directed against Germany ... Only quick German victories led to the collapse of the Anglo-Russian plans to attack the German troops in Romania and Bulgaria "(70, p. 169) .

*In the last paragraph, the Germans were deeply mistaken: there were no joint "Anglo-Russian plans" and even more so "Anglo-Russian fronts" were not in sight. Surprisingly, but true: **Comrade Stalin did not make the slightest attempt to improve his relations with Hitler's real opponents.** Although, according to sound logic, it would be necessary to start the Great*

Turn in the foreign policy of the USSR. Moreover, the rigidity (if not to say - boorish arrogance) in relation to the warring Britain and its overseas ally only grew. A detailed analysis of this component of the events of the first half of 1941 is far beyond the scope of this book. Without trying to embrace the immensity, we will nevertheless cite a few rather eloquent episodes. After W. Churchill headed the British government in May 1940,

he replaced the British ambassador to the USSR and sent Stafford Cripps to Moscow, the most "leftist" person loyal to Soviet Russia who was only in his "team" ("The only time I was booed in Parliament was when I spoke in favor of the Soviet Union," Cripps told Vyshinsky.) On July 1, 1940, Cripps was able to get a meeting with Stalin (a rare honor in those days - for example, the US Ambassador Steinhardt was never received by Stalin) and gave him a personal message from Churchill. That document, in particular,

says:

"...At the moment, the whole of Europe, including both our countries, faces the problem of how the states and peoples of Europe will react to the prospect of Germany establishing hegemony over the continent ... The Soviet government is itself in a position to judge whether the interests of the Soviet Union are threatened by the current desire of Germany to hegemony over Europe and, if so, how can these interests be best secured..." (120, p. 82)

Having outlined the position of Her Majesty's Government, S. Cripps heard the following in response:

"... Comrade. Stalin says that we want to change the old balance in Europe, which acted against the USSR ... Comrade. Stalin notes that if there is a question of restoring the balance and, in particular, establishing a balance in relation to the USSR, then we must say that we cannot agree to this ... As for subjective data about the desires for domination in Europe, Comrade. Stalin considers it his duty to declare that in all the meetings that he had with German representatives, he did not notice such a desire on the part of Germany - to dominate the whole world ..." (120, p. 78)

Subsequently (largely due to the annexation of the Baltic states), the cooling of Soviet-British relations reached the point that Cripps unsuccessfully tried for several months to get a meeting with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR Molotov. Convinced of the futility of these attempts, Cripps (presumably on instructions from London) on April 18, 1941, met with Vyshinsky, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, to whom he handed over his statement to Molotov in writing. Cripps' note read, in part: "... *Since the time I had the pleasure*

*of talking with Your Excellency, time has passed, fraught with events ... As for relations between our two countries, they have not changed. The British Government still sees itself compelled **to regard the Soviet Union as Germany's main source of supply**, both on account of goods directly exported, and as regards goods transported through the Soviet Union to Germany from the Far East in the amount of about one thousand tons per day ... I have no I would like to ask Your Excellency a question about the intentions of the Soviet government, for I am fully aware of what difficulties*

*an answer to a question of this kind could involve. But I have a desire to ask, in the light of the considerations outlined above, whether the Soviet Government is now interested in bringing about an **immediate improvement in its political and economic relations** with the British Government, or, on the contrary, the Soviet Government will be satisfied that these relations **maintain their present, completely negative, character until the end of the war*** (here and above it is highlighted by me. - M.S.). *If the answer to the first part of the question is satisfactory, then, in my opinion, no time should be wasted in order for such an improvement to benefit one side or the other ... "(121, pp. 94-95) The answer to these questions seemed to Vyshinsky It is clear that he decided to break away from his usual diplomatic reserve and immediately expressed his own opinion:*

"... The note, since it can be judged by the first reading, I do not consider it serious, and we have no suitable

*English government relations, as I explained to Cripps in a conversation with him on March 22 on a similar occasion. Moreover, the note even contains places that are completely unacceptable to us... On the issue of the inviolability and security of the USSR, I told Cripps that the USSR **itself would take care of this, without the help of advisers** (emphasis mine. - M.S.)... I rejected Cripps' attempts to challenge our right to trade with Germany and with any other state, declaring that this is our business, and only ours ... " (121, pp. 92-93)*

On

June 5, 1941, Ambassador Cripps left Moscow "for consultation with his government." As a result, on the eve of the beginning of the Soviet-German war, Great Britain in the USSR was represented only by a charge d'affaires, secretary of the British embassy Baggaley. His first meeting with Vyshinsky (Molotov probably did not consider it possible to stoop to talking to the secretary of the embassy) took place on June 16, 1941, a week before the start of the war. The main subject of discussion was the famous TASS Report of June 13, 1941, in which the rumors about the imminent start of the Soviet-German war were declared "*clumsily concocted propaganda of forces hostile to the USSR and Germany*", and in the first lines of the Message, the increased dissemination of these deliberately false rumors for some reason it was associated with the name of Stafford

Cripps. "... At the request of Baggaley, I received him at 17:00. 10 minutes. Baggaley stated that he had come to me as Deputy People's Commissar on his first visit... Further, Baggaley stated that the TASS report (as he presents it) contains two main points: firstly, the report states that there are no negotiations between the USSR and Germany there was, and secondly, that there were no grounds for expressing concern about the movements of German troops.

When I asked who Baggaley had in mind when speaking about expressing concern, Baggaley answered

- the USSR. To this I replied to Baggaley that, as can be seen from the TASS report, **there was no reason for the USSR to show any concern. Others may be worried** (emphasis mine - M.S.)" (121, p. 376). Even

less so in Moscow they stood on ceremony with their future chief

ally.

"I will not dwell on our relations with the United States of America, if only because nothing good can be said about them. (Laughter) We have learned that some people in the United States do not like the successes of the Soviet foreign policy in the Baltic states (as in the text. - MS). But, to be honest, we are of little interest in this circumstance (Laughter, applause), since we are coping with our tasks even without the help of these disgruntled gentlemen. (Laughter, applause.)" (70, p. 75). So fun was the

people's deputies, deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 1, 1940, when they "heard and approved" the report of the head of the government Molotov on the foreign policy of the USSR. The US ambassador in Moscow was treated harshly, without jokes. So, on June 5, 1941 (on the very day when Cripps left Moscow without salty slurping), Comrade Lozovsky, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, "reprimanded" (this is the term he uses in his report) the American Ambassador Steingardt in full:

"... The US government confiscated gold belonging to the State Bank of the USSR (this term was used by Comrade Lozovsky to designate the gold and foreign exchange reserves of the Baltic states, which were kept in American banks), seized the ships of the Baltic republics and not only did not liquidate the missions and consulates of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, but recognizes these puppet envoys and consuls as representatives of non-existent governments...

*After I "reprimanded" Steingardt, he began to complain that he was not invited to discuss questions concerning relations between the two sides, and this partly explains the situation. **He never spoke to Comrade. Stalin** (highlighted by me. - M.S.), and spoke with Comrade Molotov two or three times and only on minor issues ... According to Steingardt, in the next 12 months, and some believe, in the next 2-3 weeks, the Soviet Union will experience the greatest crisis. He is surprised that in such a difficult time the Soviet Union does not want to strengthen its relations with the United States ...*

To this I replied that the Soviet Union was very calm about all sorts of rumors about an attack on its borders. The Soviet Union will meet fully armed anyone who tries

violate its boundaries. If there were such people who would try to do this, then the day of the attack on the Soviet Union would be the most unfortunate in the history of the country that attacked the USSR ... "(121, pp. 316–322) character" until the

first days of the Soviet-German war. And this is very strange, considering that the Big Turn in Stalin's strategic plans took place not after June 22, 1941, but two months before this "most unfortunate day" in the history of the USSR. It is impossible to name the exact date of the "turn", and, of course, it never happened. The reassessment of the situation and the development of a new plan of action did

not happen overnight. Nevertheless, April 13, 1941, can be called a certain, rather conditional, time mark. On this day, a major event of world significance took place (in Moscow, the Neutrality Pact between the USSR and Japan was signed - an agreement that untied Stalin's hands for actions in the West), and there was also a small episode at the Moscow railway station, which, however, attracted close attention of politicians and diplomats. In the report, which the German Ambassador on the same day marked "Urgent! Secret! sent to Berlin, this strange episode was described as follows:

"... Obviously unexpectedly for both the Japanese and the Russians, Stalin and Molotov suddenly appeared and, in an emphatically friendly manner, greeted Matsuoka and the Japanese who were present there and wished them a pleasant journey. Then Stalin loudly asked about me and, finding me, came up, put his arm around my shoulders and said: "We must remain friends, and now you must do everything for this!" Then Stalin turned to the acting German military attache, Colonel Krebs, and, having previously made sure that he was German, told him: "We will remain friends with you in any case." Stalin, undoubtedly, welcomed Colonel Krebs and me in this way intentionally and thereby consciously generalized to the large audience that was present there " (70, p. 157). Demonstrative hugs were soon supplemented by other equally countries demonstrative actions. Embassies and diplomatic missions of were closed in Moscow

defeated and occupied by the Wehrmacht. The embassy of the same Yugoslavia was no exception, on the friendship agreement with which, as they say, "the ink has not yet dried." In May 1941, the Soviet Union obligingly recognized the pro-German government of Iraq, which came to power through a military coup. Questions of economic cooperation were also resolved in the most benevolent spirit towards Germany. The memorandum of the German Foreign Ministry dated May 15, 1941 noted: "*Negotiations with the*

First Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Trade of the USSR were held by Krutikov in a very constructive spirit ... I get the impression that we could present economic demands to Moscow, even going beyond the scope of the agreement from January 10, 1941 ... At this time, the volume of raw materials stipulated by the contract is delivered by the Russians punctually, despite the fact that it costs them great effort; agreements, especially with regard to grain, are being carried out remarkably ..." (70, pp. 162–164) On May 5, 1941,

Stalin, unexpectedly for everyone, appointed himself head of government (Chairman of the Council of

People's Commissars of the USSR). It is hardly necessary to explain that even before May 5, Comrade Stalin, being just one of the many deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, had absolute power. And until May 5, 1941, Comrade Molotov, being the nominal head of the government, coordinated any step, any decision, any foreign policy statement with the will of Stalin. For many years, Stalin ruled the country, feeling no need to formalize his real status as the sole dictator. And if on May 5, 1941, such a strange act was nevertheless committed, then it is difficult to find any explanation for this, except for Stalin's immodest desire to leave his (and not Comrade Molotov's) signature on orders and documents that will forever change the course of world history.

The aged Count Schulenburg was completely fascinated by the suddenly flourishing Soviet-German friendship (by the way, in 1944 the former German ambassador to the USSR was executed for participating in a conspiracy against Hitler, so his "naive gullibility" could not be as naive as seems). On May 24, 1941, in another report to Berlin, he writes: "*The fact that the foreign policy of the USSR*

*primarily aimed at preventing a clash with Germany, is proved by the position taken by the Soviet government **in recent weeks** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), the tone of the Soviet press, which considers all events relating to Germany in an unobjectionable form, and the observance of economic agreements..." (70, p. 165)*

Hitler, unfortunately, was not so gullible. He correlated the unexpectedly developed loyalty of Moscow with the information coming through intelligence channels about the strategic deployment of the Red Army and assessed the situation quite adequately. Started in December 1940, preparations for the invasion of the USSR reached the finish line in the spring of 1941. On April 30, 1941, Hitler set the start date for Operation Barbarossa (June 22) and the date for the railroads to switch to the maximum military traffic schedule (May 23). On June 8, the tasks according to the invasion plan were brought to the attention of the army commanders, on June 10 they were informed of the start date of the operation. On the evening of June 21, in a letter to Mussolini, Hitler outlined his decision in the following words: *"Under these conditions, I decided to put an end to the hypocritical game of the Kremlin ..."* (70, p. 172)

Such was the general course of events in big politics, against which relations developed (more precisely, the conflict escalated) between the USSR and Finland. A plausible and reasoned reconstruction of the motives and actions of the Soviet leadership in the first half of 1941 is hardly possible in the conditions of the secrecy of information that exists to this day. Once again we remind the reader that almost the entire array of documents of units, formations, military districts and the high command of the Red Army for the first half of the year (until June 22) 1941 was removed from the archives of the RGVA and TsAMO available to an independent researcher. As for the "Special Folders" declassified at the beginning of the 21st century, the minutes of the meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the documents of the Defense Committee (KO) under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, their study suggests that these supreme government bodies were mainly engaged in supply and marketing and production issues. Judging by the declassified materials, it is hard to believe that the Politburo of the Central Committee and the Defense Com

some relation to the adoption of the most important military-political decisions. A typical example: "Special folders" of the meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee for June 1940 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 27, 28) contain a single mention of the occupation of the three Baltic countries that took place this month, namely - On June 19, a decision was made to issue troops performing "special tasks" an additional number of matches, shag and smoking paper (144). The presentation of the content of this "special task" is not entrusted even to the top secret "Special Folders".

Of course, "there is a hole in the old woman." They couldn't hide everything. The Soviet bureaucratic machine produced, multiplied and sent to thousands of recipients such gigantic mountains of documents that it was beyond the power of this machine to completely seize and destroy evidence. Something survived, some erased traces of the most important decisions are found, sometimes - in the most unexpected, "non-core" funds. In full measure, all of the above applies to the "Finnish component" of the military-political plans of the Stalinist leadership. Without even trying to compose a coherent picture of events from an extremely insufficient number of "mosaic fragments", we will cite some of the documents and facts that have become available, supplementing them with information gleaned from the works of domestic and foreign historians.

On November 27, 1940 (that is, just two days after the ill-fated date of November 25), President of Finland K. Kallio submitted a petition to the State Council for his voluntary resignation. This was preceded by events that seemed more appropriate in a mystical thriller than in reality. On the eve of the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty of March 12, 1940, President Kallio, signing the authority of the Finnish delegation to conclude an agreement on predatory Stalinist conditions, uttered in a fit of temper the fatal phrase: "Let the hand that signed such a document wither away." In August 1940, Kallio fell seriously ill, he suffered a stroke, after which his right arm was taken away, his health continued to deteriorate further, and on the eve of Christmas Kallio died suddenly on the platform of the Helsinki railway station from a second stroke (25).

After Kallio's resignation, extraordinary presidential elections in Finland were scheduled for December 19, 1940.

Of course, this could not escape the attention of the Soviet leadership. The actual source of information about the conversations that took place in Moscow are the memoirs of Yu.-K. Paasikivi (at that time - Ambassador to the USSR, and in 1946-1956 - President of Finland). But we will give a brief retelling of them in the presentation of the leading Russian specialist in the history of Soviet-Finnish relations, who worthily continues the glorious traditions of Soviet historiography:

*“Two weeks before the elections, on December 6, 1940, Paasikivi was invited to Molotov. During the conversation, the people's commissar stated: “We do not want to interfere in your affairs, and **we do not make any hint about the candidacy of the new president of Finland, but we are closely following the preparations for these elections. Whether Finland wants peace with the Soviet Union will be clear from who is elected president. Further, Molotov **firmly stated that the USSR was categorically opposed to such candidates as Tanner, Mannerheim or Svinhufvud ... Thus, the Soviet leadership **clearly expressed**** (here and above it was emphasized by me. - M.S.) its position.***

Moreover, as noted in Paasikivi's memoirs, at one of the subsequent conversations in an informal manner at the moment when the Finnish envoy was already leaving the office, Molotov unexpectedly said to him in conclusion: “We are glad to see you here, but we would also welcome you to as Finnish president”... Apparently, the wish that Paasikivi

became president of Finland in 1940 testified to the fact that Moscow still continued to hope for the opportunity to coordinate Finland's foreign policy line. Nevertheless, in Helsinki, it was considered that Ryti was the most

convenient as President of Finland ” (155, p. 145). In the last remark, the Russian professor undoubtedly made

a mistake. Voting during presidential elections took place not only in Helsinki, but in all cities, towns and villages in Finland. But, presumably, the hypothesis that the results

elections can be determined not by apparatus intrigues in the capital, but by the will of the people, still seems completely unrealistic to the Russian social scientist. As for the verb "coordinate" used above, this, I hope, is just a typo. You can coordinate something with something, but Stalin, in the person of Molotov, wanted to "correct", i.e., correct Finland's foreign policy line in the "most convenient" direction for him. But this time, an attempt at gross interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country failed, and Risto Ryti was elected president, who had previously adequately performed the duties of prime minister during the hardest period of the "winter war" for Finland and the months of "cold peace" that followed (Ryti took over head of government on the second day of the war, December 1, 1939). At the beginning of 1941, the conflict around the Petsamo nickel flared up with renewed

vigor. Moscow demanded the transfer of the mines to a joint venture in which 50% of the shares would belong to the Soviet side. Finland refused. The Soviet leadership tried to "correct" Helsinki's position using economic pressure combined with political blackmail. The USSR unilaterally denounced the trade agreement concluded in the summer of 1940 and stopped the supply of goods, including grain. One glance at the geographical map is enough to assess the possible consequences of such a step. Finland is a rich country. There is a lot of

wood, cellulose, the same nickel. Humans, however, cannot eat paper and stainless steel. Even with a good harvest of its own, Finland was forced to import about 20 thousand tons of grain per month, not to mention gasoline, coal, rubber, textiles and other types of industrial raw materials. After the occupation of Norway and the establishment of the actual dominance of the German fleet in the Baltic Sea, Finland's transport communications with Europe and the USA were almost completely cut off. Theoretically, however, there was an ice-free port in Petsamo, but the absence of a railway line connecting Petsamo with the railway network of central and southern Finland minimized the role of the polar "window to the world" even in peacetime. IN

conditions of a fierce war that unfolded in 1941 on sea lanes (including in the North Sea), who wish to bring a cargo ship to Petsamo

got smaller and smaller.

The persistence with which Stalin-Molotov and Co. tried to "press Finland against the wall" is worthy of surprise, **not realizing and not noticing at the same time that there is a "door" in the "wall" through which they pushed Finland out.** This "door" led to closer and closer cooperation between the social democratic country and Hitler's "Third Reich". It was hard to think of a better gift to Hitler than the suspension of grain supplies to Finland from the USSR. In the situation that arose at the beginning of 1941, Germany immediately "turned its shoulder" to Finland, which found itself on the verge of famine. According to Mannerheim, already in the spring of 1941, *"90 percent of the country's total imports came from Germany"* (22, p. 362). Is it necessary to prove that such a degree of economic dependence de facto deprived Finland of the status of a sovereign and neutral state. However, it was precisely this - the elimination of Finnish sovereignty - that was the invariable goal of Stalin's policy, however, due to the extreme incompetence and short-sightedness (in Russian, one can say in short and simpler - stupidity) of the Kremlin rulers, Finland did not at all turn into a "brotherly Soviet Karelo -Finland", and in the protectorate of Germany ...

An attempt to organize a trade blockade was supplemented by political pressure. On January 18, Moscow recalled its ambassador from Helsinki. In "diplomatic language" the recall of the ambassador means the last step before breaking off diplomatic relations and the penultimate one before the start of the war. At least that is how Paasikivi assessed the situation (*"The Soviet Union will not fail to use force against us if the problems are not resolved"*). A similar opinion was expressed in his memoirs by Lieutenant General (in the winter of 1941 - Colonel, Chief of Staff of the 14th Army) L.S. Svirsky. He recalls that, having learned about the ongoing negotiations with Finland, he was very surprised: "Why buy if the war will start soon and we will return

Petsamo to ourselves?" (148) On January 23, 1941, a meeting of the country's top leadership was held at the Mannerheim House (President Ryti,

Prime Minister Rangel, Chief of the General Staff Heinrichs). Mannerheim, referring to intelligence data **on the beginning of the concentration of Soviet troops near the border of Finland**, proposed to immediately begin at least partial mobilization. The lack of information about the plans and operational regroupings of the troops of the Leningrad Military District in January-February 1941 does not allow us to either confirm or refute the validity of Mannerheim's fears. Be that as it may, the decision to start mobilization was not made at that time. On the other hand, completely bewildered Paasikivi offered to give Stalin - out of harm's way - the entire region of nickel mines (26). Having learned that the government was discussing such methods of "pacifying" the eastern neighbor, on February 10, 1941, Mannerheim announced to the president his intention to resign from the post of commander-in-chief if the capitulation policy was implemented. An acute internal political crisis erupted in Finland. On February 20, Paasikivi resigned and was recalled from Moscow to his homeland. Thus, diplomatic relations between Finland and the USSR from the end of February to mid-April 1941 were

actually interrupted. The tough position of Marshal Mannerheim (who in October 1939, on the contrary, most persistently advised politicians to come to terms with Stalin without bringing matters to an armed conflict) was explained not only by the tragic experience of the "winter war". According to M. Jokipii, through several secret channels, the Germans brought to the attention of Mannerheim information about the progress of Molotov's November talks in Berlin (26). Aware of Germany's position, Mannerheim suggested that the Soviet Union would not risk escalating relations with Hitler over the issue of the Petsamo mines. The lack of reliable information, again, does not allow us to answer the question of whether the intransigence shown by Finland was the reason for the peaceful resolution of the "nickel crisis", or whether Stalin did not plan to go beyond the

bluff and the "war of nerves" in the winter of 1941. The spring of 1941 began without outward signs of conflict. Routine preparations for the war with Finland continued at the headquarters and troops. In the fund of the reconnaissance department of the 5th air division

*"To the Chief of Staff of the 5th AD, Vyborg,
02/27/41 At the same time, I am forwarding maps of the territory of
Finland with cartographically imprinted fortifications according to the RO
(intelligence department. - M.S.) of the LVO headquarters on 12/12/40." (149)*
Further in the text - a list of 30 cards.

*"To the Chief of Staff of the 5th AD, Vyborg,
02/28/41 At the same time, I am sending intelligence material "Brief
information on the theater and the armed forces of Finland", copy. No. 6,
edition of the RO headquarters of the LVO. There is a resolution on the
letter: "To Major Gribovsky. Work out and report conclusions. (150)"*

*"To the Chief of Staff of the 123rd Rifle Division, 43rd Rifle
Division, 5th SAD, 24th KAP, on May 16, 1941, I am sending a material-
report on the armed forces of Finland for use in practical work to study a
potential enemy. Head of the 2nd department of the headquarters of the
5th °C Captain Kovantsev " (151).*

*"To the Chief of Staff of the 5th AD, Vyborg,
05/16/41 At the same time, I am sending photographs of the city and
the Lappeenranta
airfield" (152). According to the Finnish historian K. Geust, "during the
first half of 1941, the Finnish border guard registered 85 overflights of
Soviet aircraft over its territory" (145, p. 228). Taking into account the huge
length of the border and the complete absence of radars in the Finnish air
defense system, it can be assumed that the total number of reconnaissance
flights of Soviet aviation over Finnish territory was even greater ...*

At the headquarters of the Red Army, the development of some plans continued. And although we do not know their content, some conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the "Control plan for conducting gatherings of senior command personnel, games, field trips and exercises in the districts in 1941" published in the second half of the 90s. (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 242, l. 134–151) (121, pp. 29–45). The document was approved by Lieutenant General Malandin, Chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, on April 4, 1941. A careful study of this multi-page document reveals several "groups" of simultaneous events, the content of which is quite consistent with the meetings of the Red Army high command known from other sources.

First of all, one should note such an important event as the "operational-strategic game conducted by the General Staff." The plan for April 4, 1941 quite clearly fixes the intention to hold three such games: - with the

command of the Far Eastern Front, the Trans-Baikal and Siberian districts in the period from April 1 to April 15, 1941; -

with the command of the Leningrad and Arkhangelsk districts in the period from May 1 to May

15, 1941; - with the command of the Kyiv and Odessa districts in the period from July 1 to July 15, 1941.

It is worth noting that immediately after the end of the last game, in the period from July 15 to 30, it was planned to conduct "intercircle Air Force exercises" of the Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov military districts under the leadership of the Air Force Main Directorate. It is noteworthy that neither the Western nor the Baltic Special Military Districts were involved in the operational-strategic games, and the Air Force of the Western OVO were supposed to participate in interdistrict exercises from August 1 to 15 together with the Air Force of the Moscow Military District and Air Defense of Moscow. All this can hardly be interpreted in any other way than the final rejection of the "northern option" of the general operational plan (delivering the main strike in East Prussia and northern Poland) and the in-depth development of the "southern option" (with the main strike in southern Poland, Slovakia and Romania). Returning to

the "Finnish direction", we find that in the period from March 1 to March 15, 1941, a "field observation trip" was planned in the Leningrad District. On the same dates (March 1–15), in the Oryol Military District it was planned to *"participate in a viewing field trip of the Leningrad Military District"*, and in the Urals Military District - *"participation in a viewing field trip"*, however, it is not known with whom. However, an analysis of the entire text of the "Control Plan" shows that during the specified period, field trips were carried out only in the Leningrad Military District and the ArkhVO. Geographically, the Leningrad, Orlovsky and Ural districts do not even have common borders, but within the framework of the operational plan for the invasion of Finland ("Considerations" of September 18, 1940 and "Directive" of November 25, 1940) they have a common task: to deploy **four** armies (7th and 23rd from the troops of the Leningrad District, the 20th at the base of the Orlovsky troops and the 22nd at the base of the troops

Ural districts) and advance as part of the North-Western Front from Vyborg and Sortavala to Helsinki and Mikkeli. As

part of the Northern Front (in accordance with the "Considerations" of September 18, 1940, this front was to be deployed on the basis of the administration of the Arkhangelsk Military District), the 21st Army, deployed on the basis of the Volga Military District, was to advance from Alakurtti to Kemi and Oulu. And what? Turning to the "Control Plan", we find that in the Volga Military District, under the leadership of the General Staff, in the period from August 15 to 30, an *"observation front-line field trip together with the Arkhangelsk Military District" was to be carried out.*

The plans for the training of the highest command staff were persistently carried out. *"In March, under the leadership of the Deputy Commissar of Defense, General K.A. Meretskov, a large multi-day operational game was held in the district,"* writes the former commander of the Leningrad District M.M. in his memoirs. Popov (194. p. 32). A field trip with the participation of the headquarters of the Leningrad, Orlovsky and Ural districts was also actually carried out by the General Staff in the period from March 13 to 20. As expected, during the trip the theme "Offensive operation in winter" was practiced (34, p. 405). You can find out about the tasks solved during the district and army field trips without even referring to the secret archives, "cloaks and daggers." In the official history of the "Order of Lenin of the Leningrad Military District" published in 1968, we read: *"Field trips on the Karelian Isthmus and the Kola Peninsula were instructive, during which **the nature of the modern offensive operation and combat in the conditions of a wooded and swampy area was studied*** (emphasis mine. - M.S.) *on the scale of the army, corps and division..."* (154, p. 149) Starting from mid-April, **quite simultaneously with the demonstrative Soviet-German relations, an unexpected warming began in the "Finnish sector"**. Finally, the ambassador of the Soviet Union

returned to Finland, and this was already a new person: instead of Zotov, who diligently played the role of an "evil investigator", the "kind and accommodating" Orlov arrived in Helsinki. Comrade Orlov apparently charmed the Finnish politicians so much that even many decades later, Professor M. Jokipii writes: *"With the arrival of the new Ambassador Orlov*

a completely new stage of relations has opened up." E.T., a resident of Soviet intelligence in Finland, allegedly also achieved great success. Sinitsyn. According to his own memoirs and published Soviet intelligence reports, in Moscow they received reports on the meetings of the Finnish government with almost verbatim accuracy, and the mysterious unnamed "prominent political figures of Finland" served Sinitsin "on parcels", like a goldfish with a stupid old woman (156, 157). Alas, the events of June 25, 1941 for some reason showed the complete ignorance of the Soviet command about the real state and deployment of the Finnish and German troops, and it is precisely this ignorance that is used by some modern historians as a "good reason" justifying the completely inadequate actions of the Red Army ... But to we will return to this issue later.

Simultaneously with the change of ambassador in Helsinki, the radio station "Karelo-Finland" stopped inflammatory radio propaganda in Finnish. One of the Finnish communist defectors (see Chapter 2.2) wrote about this: *"The Social Democrats are delighted and consider this a concession from the Soviet Union, as well as a replacement of the ambassador"* (158). Moreover, in April 1941, the Soviet leadership brought to the attention of Helsinki that it no longer objected to the creation of a defensive alliance between Sweden and Finland! (34, p. 172) On May 14, Paasikivi returned to Moscow as the ambassador of Finland. On May 30, 1941, Stalin invited the Finnish envoy to the Kremlin and told him verbatim the following: *"I will do you a personal friendly service. I will give 20,000 tons of grain, half of which Finland will receive immediately.* And this promise was fulfilled - the indicated amount of grain arrived in Finland before the start of the war (46, p. 221).

The disparate mosaic of events in the last months of the world remains to be supplemented by two more remarkable fragments.

In early June, the commander of the KBF, Vice Admiral V.F. Tributs, and the commander of the Leningrad Military District, Lieutenant General M.M., visited the military base in Khanko with an inspection. Popov. June 15 M.M. Popov signed a report sent to the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR, in which he expressed concern about the insufficient, in his opinion, defense capability of the base in Hanko and expressed a number of specific

proposals for strengthening Hanko (deploy the 8th rifle brigade into a full-fledged division, form a separate artillery and machine-gun and "tank" battalions, etc.). The report ended with the following phrase: *"All these measures **must be carried out no later than August 1, 1941** (emphasis mine. - M.S.)"* (159).

Above, in Chapter 2.2., were mentioned the reports on the work of the party organizations of the Communist Party of Finland, compiled by Finnish communists who crossed the front line in September 1941. There were also excerpts from Comrade Reino V. Kosunen's report "On the Work of the Party Organizations in Helsinki and Kuopio". The report ended with the following self-critical remark:

*"We, the members of the party, were not at the level of international events at the time when the new war began. **Two weeks before the start of the war** between Germany - the Soviet Union and Finland (so in the text. - M.S.) I received a report from the party leadership on the assessment of the situation, since I had to go on a party business trip to Korkila.*

*The report contained the following: 1. The war continues and spreads. This is not a lightning war. 2. **No changes***

***are expected** in the position of Finland until the autumn (here and above it is highlighted by me. - M.S.), so the war is not expected yet.*

We, therefore, did not prepare for war earlier than in the autumn" (160). The ability for self-criticism adorns a person - but in this case, Comrade Kosunen is unfair to himself and to the "party leadership". This party was not controlled from Helsinki, but from another place. The Finnish comrades could not work out any other estimates of the possible dates for the start of the "new war", except for those that came from Moscow (and they did not have the right to). So the blame for the fact that the Finnish communists **"prepared for war", which will begin "not earlier than autumn"**, does not lie with them ...

Chapter

2.7 Very active defense

On May 24, 1941, many hours of meeting, the participants of which, in addition to Stalin himself, were:

- *Deputy Prime Minister and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov; - People's*
- Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko;*
- *Chief of the General Staff Zhukov and his first Deputy, Head of the Operational Directorate, Vatutin;*
- *Head of the Main Directorate of the Red Army Air Force Zhigarev; - commanders of the troops of the five western border districts (Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa), members of the Military Councils (commissars) and air force commanders of these five districts.* How do we know this? At the beginning of

"perestroika", in 1990, the journal "Izvestia of the Central Committee of the CPSU" had the imprudence to publish a multi-page "Journal of records of persons accepted by Comrade. Stalin", in which, day after day, year after year, everyone who entered and left the "leader's" office was recorded. Thanks to this "Journal of Recording Faces", the very fact of the Conference on May 24, 1941 became known, as well as the fact that there were no other equally representative meetings of the top military-political leadership of the USSR - neither a few months before May 24, nor after **this dates up to the start of the war**. That, in fact, is the entire "mass of information" available today. Neither Soviet nor Russian official historiography uttered a word about the subject of discussion and the decisions taken on May 24. Nothing was reported in their memoirs by the few participants in that

Conference who lived to see Stalin's death. Declassified already at the beginning of the 21st century, the Special Folders of the minutes of the meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks for May 1941 (RGASPI, f.17, op. 162, d. 34-35) also do not contain even the slightest mention of this Meeting. And only Marshal Vasilevsky, in his article, which has lain in archival silence for almost 27 years, recalls: *"In a few weeks*

before the attack on us by fascist Germany, unfortunately I can't name the exact date, all the documentation on the district operational plans was transferred by the General Staff to the command and headquarters of the corresponding military districts" (162) .

Unfortunately, "all documentation" on operational plans has not been declassified to this day. Chronologically, the last known document of Soviet military planning is "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies", compiled no earlier than May 15, 1941 (TsAMO, f.16, op. 2951, d. 237, l.1–15). Published 15 years ago (in issues 1-2 of the Military Historical Journal in 1992), this document immediately found itself at the center of a fierce debate. Perhaps this was due to the fact that readers who had not yet had time to wean themselves from the traditional myths of Soviet propaganda were shocked by the phrase: "*I consider it necessary in no case to give the initiative to the German Command, preempt the enemy and attack the German army at the moment when it be in the stage of deployment and will not yet have time to organize the front and the interaction of the combat arms" (121, p. 217).* It is difficult to understand what could "scandalize the public" so

much here - the desire to get ahead of the enemy and "under no circumstances give him the initiative to act" is only an elementary requirement of common sense. If there was any element of novelty in the May Considerations, it was expressed in the phrase preceding the sentence "preempt the enemy." Namely: "Germany has the ability to warn us in the deployment and deliver a surprise strike." In all other known variants of the plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, there is no such phrase in content. This suggests that by mid-May 1941, the Soviet military leadership was already clearly aware that Germany's preparations for an attack on the USSR were in full swing. That is why the task is set to pre-empt the enemy, and to do this, immediately carry out a number of measures, "*without which it is impossible to deliver a surprise strike against the enemy both from the air and on the ground" (121, p. 220).*

As regards, in fact, operational plans, the planned grouping of troops, directions of strikes, timing and lines, the May "Considerations" completely (in some cases - verbatim) repeat all the previous, starting from September 1940, known versions of the strategic plan.

deployment of the Red Army: *"a) deliver the main blow by the forces of the*

Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice, cutting off Germany from its southern allies;

b) deliver an auxiliary strike by the left wing of the Western Front in the direction of Sedlec, Demblin, with the aim of pinning down the Warsaw grouping and assisting the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping;

*c) to conduct **an active defense against Finland** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), East Prussia, Hungary and Romania and be ready to strike against Romania if the situation is favorable "* (121, p. 217). On June 13, 1941, Deputy

Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin compiled a certificate "On the deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in case of war in the West" (TsAMO, f.16A, op. 2951, d. 236, l. 65–69) (121, pp. 359–361). The "Information" dated June 13 (and this is the last of the known pre-war documents of this kind) does not contain a single mention of the tasks and action plans of the troops. Only numbers, numbers of armies, stations for unloading troops, the required number of wagons and echelons. However, comparing the "Information" of June 1941 with the May "Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan" and, most importantly, with the actual situation of the Red Army troops as of June 22, 1941, one cannot help but be convinced that the real concentration of troops took place in direct accordance with the May "Considerations". It is the actual redeployment of troops, the real creation of strike groups, the formation of which corresponded to pre-war plans (in particular, the May "Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan"), which is the most important and irrefutable evidence that these plans were not at all the subject of "desk research", **but consistently and firmly implemented.**

The amount of work done turned out to be so great that, despite many years of "cleansing the information field", some documents and facts became known. For example, recently declassified documents of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR reveal a top secret "List of issues to be considered at meetings of the Defense Committee", compiled on April 12, 1941. It is supposed, in particular, to consider such issues:

*"P. 14 On the monetary allowance of the personnel of the Red Army, Navy and NKVD troops for **wartime**...*

*p. 16 On the establishment of a commission for granting **deferrals from conscription for mobilization and in time of war**, and on the procedure for granting deferrals" (169).*

On May 10, 1941, the Defense Committee approved the "List of issues to be considered at the meeting" (whom with whom is not indicated). Item 14 of the agenda reads as follows: *"On additional cost estimates **for the period of mobilization and the first month of the war**" (170).* On May 12, 1941, the "List of Questions in the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" was prepared. Item 7: *"On*

*the work of the Civil Air Fleet (Civil Air Fleet) **in wartime**" (171).* The following document deserves special attention. June 4, 1941 People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov sends N.A. Voznesensky memorandum No. 1146. Classification of the document: "Top secret, of special importance." And this is indeed a document of particular importance for the historian - for the first time, absolutely specific dates appear next to the phrase "wartime" in it: *"At the same time, I present a*

*statement of the needs of the People's Commissariat of the Navy for mine and torpedo weapons **for wartime from 07/01/41 to 01/01/43**. I ask for your instructions on increasing the allocated quantities of mine and torpedo weapons, given that the need for them in the 2nd half of 1941 is 50% of the total requirement for the period up to 1.01.43. (172).* As you can see, the People's Commissar of the Navy plans

to fight for at least a year and a half. Moreover, the operational plan for this great ocean war has already been drawn up in general terms - otherwise N.G. Kuznetsov not

could plan a specific distribution of the consumption of mine and torpedo weapons for each six months ...

Now let's return from the plans of the Great Campaign to the Soviet-Finnish confrontation. As part of the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army for the war with Germany, the Finnish border invariably remained a secondary **area of active defense**. The composition of the grouping and possible actions of the enemy were assessed as follows: "Considerations" of September 18, 1940 "... *With regard to the Finnish army, the following is expected:*

deployment: 1. at

the front from the Gulf of Finland to Savonlin up to 6 infantry. divisions supported by 3-4 German divisions; 2. to cover the direction to Kuopio, Joensuu - up to 3 infantry. divisions; 3. to cover the

Uleaborg direction (i.e., the direction of Suomussalmi - Oulu) - up to 2 infantry. divisions; 4. in the Merkyarvi area

(west of Salla) - up to 2 infantry. divisions; 5. in the Petsamo area - up to 2 infantry. divisions. The final

deployment of the Finnish army according to this option can be expected on the 20-25th day. The probability of the

concentration of significant forces of the Finnish army in the Vyborg-Leningrad direction, supported here by German divisions, predetermines the possibility of active enemy operations in this direction. In the future, in this theater, the possibility of auxiliary enemy strikes

in the Petrozavodsk and Kandalaksha directions is not ruled out "
"Refined" plan on March 11, 1941

its deployment plan: 1. To

the front from the Gulf of Finland to Savonlinna - at least 6 infantry divisions supported by 5-6 German divisions.

2. To cover the direction to Kuopio, Joensuu - up to 3 infantry divisions.

3. To cover the Uleaborg direction - up to 2 infantry divisions. 4. In the area of

Myarkyarvi - up to 2-3 infantry divisions. 5. In the Petsamo area - up to 1-2 infantry divisions. The final deployment of the Finnish army should be expected on the 20-25th day.

The probability of the concentration of significant forces of the Finnish army in **the Vyborg-Leningrad direction, supported here by German divisions**, predetermines the possibility of active enemy operations in this direction. In the May (1941) "Considerations"

about the alleged enemy grouping in the Finnish direction, only one phrase was said: *"Probable allies of Germany can put up against the USSR: Finland - up to 20 infantry divisions."*

Thus, the general assessment of the situation on the northern flank the common front remained generally unchanged.

The only thing that can be noted is a slight increase in the expected size of the Finnish army (from 15 to 20 infantry divisions) and the grouping of German troops in southern Finland (from 3-4 to 5-6 divisions). Active offensive actions of the enemy (Finns and Germans) were expected mainly on the Karelian Isthmus ("in the Vyborg-Leningrad direction"). To the north of Lake Ladoga, the possibility of inflicting "auxiliary strikes" by the enemy was only "not ruled out", and in March 1941 even this reservation disappeared. The May "Considerations" do not contain any mention of a possible enemy offensive in the area of the Finnish border. Comparing these assumptions with the currently known real state of affairs, it can be noted that if the Red Army command did

not make a mistake in assessing the number of enemy troops (the Finnish army was deployed as part of 16 infantry divisions, two jaeger and one "armored" brigade), then the idea of operational The plans of the enemy were absolutely fantastic. There was not a single German division in southern Finland (*"on the front from the Gulf of Finland to Savonlinna"*), the main blow in July 1941 was inflicted by the Finns in Ladoga Karelia (i.e. *Petrozavodsk direction*), and almost all German divisions (4 of 5)

were concentrated in the Arctic, i.e., where their appearance **was not expected in any of the variants of the pre-war plans** of the Red Army command. Let us emphasize this important remark with three bold lines; it will come in handy later on.

The combat operations of the Soviet troops on the Finnish front were presented to the authors of the plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army as follows:

"Considerations" dated September 18,

1940 *"...Given the balance of forces given earlier, our actions in the northwest should be reduced mainly to the active defense of our borders. For operations in the*

northwest, it is intended to have a Northern Front consisting of three armies and a separate rifle corps in the Estonian SSR. Total for operations as part of the Northern Front

appointed:

13 rifle divisions; 2 sec.

rifle brigades; 3 tank brigades;

20 aviation regiments,

and a total of 970 tanks and 1050 aircraft. "Considerations" in

May 1941 "... Northern Front

(LVO) - 3 armies, consisting of 15 rifle, 4 tank and 2 motorized divisions, and a total of 21 divisions, 18 regiments of aviation and the Northern Navy, with the main tasks of defense Leningrad, the port of Murmansk, Kirov railway. roads and, together with the Baltic Navy, ensure our complete dominance in the waters of the Gulf of Finland. For the same purpose, it is planned to transfer to the Northern Front from

PribOVO - the defense of the northern and northwestern coast of the Estonian SSR. Thus, in the Finnish direction, the approximate equality of the forces of the parties was

assumed (in terms of the number of rifle divisions, the enemy may even have some superiority, but the Red Army will have a significant superiority in aviation and tanks). Taking into account the presence of a strip of long-term fortifications in the Vyborg, Keksgolm and Sortavala directions, this was considered quite enough to solve the problems of active defense. For the offensive and the defeat of the Finnish army according to the plans of September 18 and November 25, 1940

city (see Chapter 2.4.) It was planned to attract **incomparably large forces** (46 rifle divisions, at least 9 tank and motorized brigades, one mechanized corps, that is, two tank and one motorized divisions, 78 aviation regiments with a total number of aircraft in 3900 units). Such forces were to be deployed at the expense of the troops of four military districts (Leningrad, Arkhangelsk, Ural, Orlovsky), and even with the involvement of some units and formations from the Moscow, Volga, Kharkov and North Caucasian districts. The general conclusion can be

formulated as follows: Finland seemed to the Soviet command to be a very serious enemy, to defeat which it was necessary to create a grouping of troops so large that a simultaneous offensive against the Wehrmacht in the southwest (in Poland and Romania) and against the Finnish army in the north was impossible. In other words, the invasion and occupation of Finland (according to the operational plans of the autumn of 1940 or similar) **was possible either before or after** the successful completion of the main task: the defeat of German forces in southeastern Europe.

In this regard, it is worth noting one incidental moment. The publishers of the "Refined Strategic Deployment Plan" dated March 11, 1941 made an unfortunate oversight, and a typo crept into the table showing the composition of the Red Army grouping *"for conducting operations in the west and on the Finnish front"*. The line for the number of rifle divisions says (120, p. 745):

- 158 in the
west; - 133 on the Finnish
front; - 171

total. It would seem that even a second grader should be clear at first glance that instead of the number 133 there should be the number 13. A person familiar with some of the basics of military affairs and the history of the Soviet-Finnish wars should understand and know that the 291st rifle division in the Red Army is simply it wasn't that it was technically impossible to deploy 133 divisions in the Finnish theater of operations, that even plans for the decisive defeat of the Finnish army and the occupation of the entire country involved the involvement of three times smaller forces, and the plans for "active defense" constantly included a number

divisions. Finally, it is completely unrealistic for the wars of the middle of the 20th century to create a strike force consisting of 133 rifle and only one (!) Panzer divisions (namely, such a structure emerges from the ill-fated table). Nevertheless, the author of a huge number of books and articles on the history of the Soviet-Finnish wars, St. Petersburg professor Comrade V.N. Baryshnikov made another scientific discovery from an unfortunate technical typo (quoted with the exact preservation of the style, i.e. tongue-tied, of the original): "... *Without disclosing in terms of determining specific tasks in these areas,*

however, the number of troops expected to conduct combat operations was indicated. Moreover, according to the Soviet command, a significant number of troops should have been deployed on the "Finnish Front" - 135 rifle divisions. This number was almost three times higher than that which was determined for conducting military operations against Finland in the autumn of 1940, which shows how seriously the information that was received about the beginning of the concentration (in March 1941 ??? - M.S.) was assessed .) German troops on Finnish territory. On the other hand, of course, such a number of divisions planned to be deployed in the zone bordering Finland indicated that in the event of a war,

Moscow did not at all intend to carry out purely defensive military operations here. Moreover, these forces, obviously, were expected to be used, moreover, not only against the Finnish army, which, according to Soviet estimates, could "put up to 18 infantry divisions against the Soviet Union ..." (155, p. 164)

On the basis of the Leningrad Military District, the Northern Front was deployed with headquarters in Pargolovo (a northern suburb of Leningrad). The composition of the Northern Front (S.F.) included three armies: the 23rd, 7th and 14th. All these armies already existed by the time the cover plan was drawn up (the 14th Army was deployed in the Murmansk region even before the "winter war"). In addition to the units and formations that were part of the three armies, directly subordinate to the command of S.f. there was the 1st mechanized corps (without the 1st tank division, which will be discussed later) and three rifle divisions (70th rifle division, 177th rifle division, 191th rifle division).

The 8th Special Rifle Brigade still remained on the Hanko Peninsula. Almost

all (with the exception of the 237th Rifle Division, which arrived in the area of Loymola station in the early 20th of June) formations of the future Northern Front were already part of the Leningrad District. An inter-district redeployment of forces to the Leningrad Military District was not planned, which once again confirms the version that, as part of the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, which began to be implemented in May 1941, the Northern Front was assigned a modest role as a defense sector. Almost all rifle divisions (with the exception of the 115th and 71st "Karelian-Finnish") participated in the "winter war", respectively, they were familiar with the theater of operations and the alleged enemy.

The "Finnish front", which is huge in length, can be conditionally divided into four sections. On the Karelian Isthmus and in Ladoga Karelia (i.e., from the coast of the Gulf of Finland in the Virolahti region to Ilomantsi in Karelia), one could still speak of the presence of a continuous "front line". In North Karelia (from Rebola to Salla) and on the Kola Peninsula (Kandalaksha - Murmansk) there were only a few "road directions" leading to the Murmansk railway, between which impenetrable forests, swamps and tundra stretched for hundreds of kilometers. It is worth noting that these "directions" were by no means a motorway, but a dirt road, at best with a gravel surface (an asphalt road on the Kandalaksha-Alakurtti section appeared only in 1997). In the summer of 1941, there were exactly five such directions: - Petsamo - Murmansk; - Salla - Alakurtti - Kandalaksha; - Kuusamo - Kestenga - Loukhi; -

Suomussalmi - Ukhta

- Kem; - Kuhmo - Rebohy -

Kochkoma. The first three

directions were covered by

the 14th Army (headquarters

in Murmansk). The army included the 42nd Rifle Corps deployed in the Salla-Alakurtti area (122nd Rifle Division, 104th Rifle Division) and two divisions in the Murmansk direction (14th Rifle Division and 52nd Rifle Division). Direction Kestenga -

Loukhi was covered by only one (242nd) rifle regiment from the 104th rifle division.

The Rebolsk and Ukhta directions were included in the cover section of the 7th Army deployed in Ladoga Karelia (headquarters in the city of Suoyarvi). In fact, only one (54th) rifle division was allocated to these two areas. In Ladoga Karelia, in the strip from Kuolismaa to Lahdenpohya, two rifle divisions were deployed: 71st Rifle Division and 168th Rifle Division. The 237th sd was allocated to the army reserve, which in mid-June was transported by rail to st. Loimola. The most powerful 23rd Army in the district was

deployed on the Karelian Isthmus: the 19th Rifle Corps (142th Rifle Division, 115th Rifle Division), the 50th Rifle Corps (43rd Rifle Division, 123rd Rifle Division), the 10th Mechanized Corps (21st Division, 24th Division, 198 md), 4 heavy

artillery regiments of the RGK. Now let's summarize the information about the composition of the troops that were supposed to be deployed in the Finnish theater of operations according to various plans of the Red Army command (in fact, "Considerations for deployment in the event of a war with Finland" dated September 18, 1940, a memorandum "On the basics of strategic deployment" dated September 18, 1940 d) in the following table:

	Фактически (июнь 1941 г.)	План вторжения (18 сентября 1940 г.)	Большой План (18 сентября 1940 г.)
Заполярье	сд — 4, тд — 1, ап РГК — 1	сд — 3, ап РГК — 1	сд — 4
Северная Карелия	сд — 1	сд — 12	сд — 1
Приладожская Карелия	сд — 3, ап РГК — 1	сд — 6	сд — 2
Карельский перешеек	сд — 5, тд — 2, ап РГК — 4	сд — 17, тбр — 3, ап РГК — 12	сд — 4, тбр — 2,
Резервы фронта	сд — 4, тд — 1	сд — 5, тд — 2,	сд — 1
ИТОГО:	сд — 17, тд — 4, ап РГК — 6	сд — 43, тд — 3,5, ап РГК — 13	сд — 12, тд — 1, ап РГК — ?

Note: - motorized divisions from the mechanized corps counted as rifle; - two tank brigades are counted as one tank division; – the table does not include 65 SCs in Estonia and the 8th RAF on the Hanko Peninsula.

As you can see, the actual grouping of troops is much smaller than the forces that, according to the plan of September 18, 1940, were supposed to "destroy the main forces of the Finnish army" and occupy Helsinki "on the 35th day of the operation." On the other hand, the composition of the forces allocated for the "active defense" of the Soviet-Finnish border increased slightly from September 1940 to May 1941. However, the most surprising feature of the May 1941 cover plan should be considered the appearance in the Arctic (in the direction of Salla - Alakurtti) of a tank division (1 TD from 1 MK). At this point, we should dwell in more detail.

The commander of the 1st MK (from which the 1st TD was withdrawn) did not know anything about the tasks assigned to the division. The report of the headquarters of the 1st MK "On the fighting in the period from 22.6 to 24.7" (signed by the corps commander, Major General Chernavsky in August 1941) says the following verbatim: "On June 17, by personal order of the chief of staff of the LenVO, Major General Nikishev, *taken from the corps and sent to perform a special task, where she left, plunging to st. Berezka (in the Pskov region). All contact with her has been lost since her departure from the corps*" (175)

Report on the military operations of the commander of the 1st Panzer Division, a participant in the war in Spain and Finland, Hero of the Soviet Union, Major General V.I. Baranov is sustained in much more energetic terms. His bewilderment (if not outrage) by the decision to send a tank division to Alakurtti V.I. Baranov formulates on the verge of what is generally permissible when discussing orders from a higher command: "As for the use of a tank division

*in the area of Alakurtti, Kayral, Salla, it is completely inappropriate and ineffective due to the lack of room for maneuver even for tank units (meaning that the terrain did not allow maneuvering not only by units, i.e., tank regiments, but even by small units. - M.S.). This area is characterized by a lake-marshy area, a large number of rocky cliffs and large arrays of stone boulders. The inexpediency of using a tank division in the Kandalaksha direction is all the more obvious since the jointly operating 42 SC from the beginning of hostilities **fought mainly defensive battles, and therefore the capabilities of the tank division were not used** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), and its main forces were not used ... The use of a tank division in this direction and similar ones is inappropriate, especially in the presence of light tanks and armored cars" (176). It's hard to disagree with this. Such use of tanks directly contradicted the requirements of the Field Manual of the Red Army (PU-39), which stated: "The use of tanks must be massive (p. 37). Great maneuverability, fire and strike power of tanks*

must be fully used for active operations ... The main tasks of tanks in the defense are: defeating the enemy who broke into the defensive zone, and first of all his tanks, destroying the enemy bypassing the flank (flanks) of the defense "(p. 391) . True, in those cases when the enemy had an overwhelming superiority in forces, and it became impossible to ensure "maneuverability" due to the lack of fuel, the tanks were buried in the ground and used by "separate ambushes". But in the Arctic, it will not be possible to bury a tank in the ground (permafrost, and the soil does not dig with a shovel), and the idea of transporting a tank division a thousand kilometers away just to bury it in the ground looks extremely ridiculous ... the high-speed BT tank inevitably lost its main

quality - mobility. And there were never any other special advantages behind this combat vehicle with bulletproof armor and a small-caliber 45-mm cannon. For "defensive battles" it would be much easier and more effective in the same echelons (and to transport the bulky "economy" of a tank division from Pskov to Alakurtti, it took more than 25 echelons) to transfer several rifle divisions or heavy artillery regiments of the RGK armed with heavy 152 mm howitzers, and even better - 203 mm caliber. In terms of the weight of the total salvo, one artillery regiment of the RGK was two to three times superior to a division of light tanks, and granite boulders will not be covered from high-explosive shells weighing 43-100 kg. Finally, such a concern of the Soviet command to cover the direction of Salla - Alakurtti, which led to the decision to "dismantle" 1 MK - the main

reserve of the district command - and send one of the two tank divisions of the 1st mechanized corps to the Arctic, seems completely incomprehensible and unjustified. As noted above, in the direction of Merkjärvi - Salla, the presence of two, at most, three Finnish infantry divisions was expected. The appearance of German units there in the spring of 1941 was not expected at all. On the other hand, on the Karelian Isthmus, on the front of the 23rd Army, the presence of *"at least 6 infantry divisions supported by 5-6 German divisions" was expected*. That's right there, on the Vyborg-Leningrad direction, where they expected

active offensive operations of a numerically superior enemy, and the tank (mechanized) corps in the reserve of the front could be used. Nevertheless, a reasonable, quite logical explanation

of the reasons for the appearance of the 1st Panzer Division in the Alakurtti area lies, as they say, "on the surface." It's just that you need to look at the surface of the earth - or a geographical map - not from left to right, from Salla to Alakurtti, but from right to left, from Salla to Rovaniemi. For the convenience of a "remote inspection", you can use the "Military Guide to Finland", prepared by the USSR People's Commissariat of Defense back in 1937. On the issue of interest to us, you can read the following:

"Route No. 15. Alakurtti - Kuolajärvi - Kemijärvi - Rovaniemi ... Section No. 2 (Section No. 1 was already captured during the "winter war", and we are not interested in it now). Kuolajärvi – Kemijärvi (99 km). Throughout the entire section there is a highway, ditched road, with an average width of 4.5–5 m; the canvas is covered with small crushed stone and sand, well-trodden, kept in good condition. The road is equipped with petrol stations. There are a significant number of bridges in the area. The bridges are in good condition... Section No. 3. Kemijärvi – Vikajärvi – Rovaniemi (99 km).

The road throughout the entire section is highway, ditched, 4.5–5 m wide. The roadbed is gravel and sand, in good condition. The road is equipped with gas stations, there is an auto connection ... Conclusions. The road is suitable for the movement of all branches of the armed forces " (178).

So, from the border to Rovaniemi (the administrative center of northern Finland) - 200 km along an improved dirt road with gravel. For a "furious march" on Rovaniemi, a panzer division armed with fast BT tanks could be considered the best tool of war available. We will not clutter up the text with an analysis of the tactical and technical characteristics of BT tanks (dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been written about this), but we will immediately give several real examples of marches performed by "bateshki" in a combat situation.

The first episode of the combat use of BT tanks was the war in Spain. On the basis of 50 BT-5 tanks, a tank regiment of the republican army was formed, which in October 1937 entered the combat area on the river. Ebro, having completed in two and a half days

march 630 km. Probably the most difficult test of the running capabilities of the BT tanks was Khalkhin Gol. At the end of May 1939, two tank brigades (6th and 11th) completed an 800-kilometer march across the hot Mongolian steppe (the air temperature in those days reached 40 degrees) to the area of future hostilities. Here is how the Hero of the Soviet Union K.N. describes these events. Abramov, commander of the tank

battalion of the 11th brigade: *"We were given an hour and a half to prepare for the alarm. The battalion was ready to move in 55 minutes ... The column moved along a barely noticeable steppe road trodden by camel caravans. In some places the road disappeared - it was covered with sand. To overcome sandy and swampy areas, tanks had to be transferred from wheeled to caterpillar. Well-trained crews performed this work in 30 minutes ... "*

After three days of the march, the "armored shock battalion" in full force, without losing a single tank on the route, entered the designated area. More time (6 days) was spent on the 800-km march by the 6th tank brigade.

Six years after the fighting at Khalkhin Gol, in August 1945, BT-7 tanks as part of the 6th Guards TA took part in the so-called Manchurian strategic operation. Tank brigades then marched 820 km through the Greater Khingan mountain range with an average march rate of 180 km per day. The old batashki (the most recent of which were released five years ago) withstood such a test. And what will seem quite unbelievable - after the hardest forced march, after the battles with separate groups of Japanese troops, more than 80% of the tanks (as of September 30, 1945) were serviceable (179, 180, 181)!

It could be said that BT tanks could easily cover 200 km from the border to Rovaniemi in one light day, but in the Arctic from the end of May to mid-July the sun does not go beyond the horizon, and the "light day" lasts 24 hours a day. Of course, a march and an offensive are different types of combat work, and a tank breakthrough 200 km deep cannot be a cakewalk. Was a tank division armed with "hopelessly obsolete" (as the Soviet propagandists repeated to us a thousand and once) light tanks capable of solving such a problem? And this question is best considered on a specific

example. From the many possible ones, we will choose the history of the 8th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, whose actions (as will be shown below) were most directly related to the fate of the 1st Mechanized Corps, and indeed the entire Leningrad

District (Northern Front) as a whole. On the morning of June 22, 1941, the 56th tank corps of the Wehrmacht under the command of Manstein launched an offensive from the Memel (Klaipeda) region to Daugavpils. The corps included the 8th Panzer, 3rd Motorized and 290th Infantry Divisions. The inclusion of an infantry division (with horse-drawn artillery and soldiers on their own two legs) in the tank corps, undoubtedly, indicates that "history gave little time" to Hitler to prepare for war. The 290th Infantry immediately lagged behind the motorized units, and in the future, Manstein's corps advanced in two divisions. By the end of the first day of the war, the 8th Panzer Division captured the bridge across the Dubysa River near the town of Aregala (80 km from the border). On June 24, in the Ukmerge region, the 56th Panzer Corps broke out onto the Kaunas-Daugavpils highway. On the morning of June 26, the 8th Panzer Division captured two bridges (road and railway) across the Daugava and occupied Daugavpils with a fight. The next day, the 3rd motorized division also reached the Daugava and crossed it upstream. As Manstein writes in his famous memoirs, *"we did it in 4 days and 5 hours, counting from the moment the offensive began; we overcame the resistance of the enemy, passing 300 km (in a*

straight line) in a continuous raid" (182, p. 189). The 56th Panzer Corps covered **300 km in four days** not through the deserted forest-tundra, but "through the line" of two dozen rifle and tank divisions of the Baltic Military District (North-Western Front). By the time the German tank corps reached Daugavpils, the troops of the Second Strategic Echelon of the Red Army (21st mechanized corps, 41st rifle and 5th airborne corps) were already approaching the line of the Daugava from the east. The Soviet command, while planning the actions of the 1st Panzer Division in May 1941, could count on the fact that there would be no enemy troops within a radius of several hundred kilometers from Rovaniemi. And this, as events showed, was an absolutely correct assumption: directly at the border, in the Merkyarvi-Kusamo strip, there were actually two infantry divisions (169th German

Finnish) and the "divisional group" (a brigade consisting of two motorized infantry regiments) of the SS "Nord", and further to the west, up to the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, there were no troops at all. The nearest Finnish division (3rd infantry in the area north of Suomussalmi) was separated from the line of a possible breakthrough by Soviet tanks by 200 km

of forest impassability. Any mention of the mechanized corps of the Leningrad Military District (1 MK and 10 MK) was accompanied in Soviet historiography by a strict reminder that they were armed with "hopelessly outdated" light tanks. And this is the purest truth. There were almost no tanks of the so-called new types ("T-34" and "KV") in the district (although the KV tanks were made at the Kirov plant in Leningrad). In the spring of 1941, dozens of railway trains were carrying new tanks to the direction of the future main attack - to the Kiev and Western military districts. However, it was not necessary to fight with neighboring districts, but with the enemy. Therefore, it is worth comparing the composition of the armament of the 1st Panzer Division of the Red Army with the armament of the Wehrmacht's tank divisions, for example, with the same 8 TD from the Manstein tank corps (183, 184).

	8 тд (нем.)	1 тд (РККА)
Тяжелые танки («КВ-1»)	0	5
Средние танки («Pz-IV», «Т-28»)	30	31
Легкие танки («Pz-38» (t), «БТ-7», «БТ-5», «Т-26», «ОТ-26»)	118	296
Танкетки («Pz-II», «Pz-I», «Pz.Bef», «Т-27»)	75	40
Всего:	223	372

So, the basis of the tank fleet of the 8th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht was captured Czech tanks "Pz-38" (t). This is a light tank with bulletproof armor, a hull assembled on rivets (when hit by a projectile, the heads of the rivets came off and mortally maimed the crew), a small-caliber 37th gun and a low-powered (125 hp) engine. The basis of the tank fleet of the 1st Panzer Division

were tanks "BT" (176 "BT-7" and 54 "BT-5"), superior to the "Czech" in armament (45-mm cannon), in power (engine 400 hp), twice - in speed. There was also a radio on the tank. The documents do not support widespread rumors that Soviet tank commanders led their units into battle waving colorful flags. In the 1st Panzer Division, out of 31 T-28 tanks, all 31 were equipped with a radio station, out of 176 BT-7 tanks there were 89 vehicles (183) with a radio station. For reference: the tank shortwave radio station 71-TK provided a communication range by telephone on the move - 15 km, by telephone in parking lots - up to 30 km, in telegraph mode - up to 50 km. A careful

reading of archival documents also reveals more distinct traces of the fact that the 1st Panzer Division, which arrived at Alakurtti, was preparing for "active defense", that is, an offensive deep into Finland.

From the report of the commander of the pontoon-bridge battalion of the division, it can be seen that after arriving in the Alakurtti area, the battalion **began the construction of three (!) Bridges** across the Tunsi-Yoki River (the town of Alakurtti is located on the eastern bank of this river). By June 30, the work was completed - and the very next day the battalion began to destroy bridges and the railway track in the strip from the Salla border station to Alakurtti. By July 4, everything had already been successfully blown

up and destroyed (185). Soviet historians never wrote about the amazing history **of the construction and then the immediate destruction of bridges** on the polar river forgotten by God and people. But in principle, for all such cases, they have long had a universal explanation in store: "An erroneous decision was unreasonably made ..." According to the deeply correct remark of V. Suvorov, communist propaganda concealed from the population of the USSR even cases of natural disasters and catastrophic the emergence of the "native party" was not to blame in any way), but at the same time, with great readiness, it was in a hurry to expose the Soviet generals and even the future Generalissimo himself in the form of complete idiots who did not understand the very basics of military science. We will not repeat the old and already known mistakes.

Timoshenko, Zhukov, Meretskov may not have been brilliant commanders, but the

firmly, they had extensive experience in actually driving regiments into battle, they understood the difference between a tank and a cannon, a cannon and a howitzer, defense and offensive perfectly. Accordingly, the redeployment of the 1st Panzer Division from Pskov to Alakurtti was envisaged in terms of covering the Leningrad District (and then put into practice) not out of stupidity, but with a very clear goal: to break through into the depths of the Finnish army's defenses, to capture the only one in the entire northern Finland's "transport corridor", to interrupt the possible transfer of German troops from Norway along the "Arctic highway" from Petsamo to Rovaniemi and further to the central and southern regions of Finland.

In concluding this chapter, two important points should be made very clear and distinct. Unfortunately, they are often confused not only by professional lovers of "looking for a black cat in a dark room", but also by quite conscientious writers and writers.
readers.

The offensive orientation of the military doctrine of the Stalinist state is an undeniable, indisputable fact. **This is not a hypothesis. This is a statutory norm**, "categorically and convexly" expressed in the very first paragraphs of the Field Regulations PU-39. *"If the enemy imposes war on us, the Workers 'and Peasants' Red Army will be the most attacking of all the armies that have ever attacked. We will wage the war offensively, with the most resolute goal of completely defeating the enemy on his own territory. The combat operations of the Red Army will be carried out for destruction. The main goal of the Red Army will be to achieve a decisive victory and completely crush the enemy.* However, the offensive orientation of the operational

plans of the Red Army **is by no means proof of the aggressiveness** of the foreign policy of the Stalinist empire. In no way. Attack and aggression are not synonyms. These are two words from two different languages. The military operational language knows such terms as "offensive", "breakthrough", "pursuit", "defense", "mobile defense", "withdrawal". In the language of politics, they talk about "aggression", "seizure", "annexation", "intervention", "assistance", "liberation", "salvation", "international debt", etc. This

two different languages. The strategic deployment plans of the Red Army do not contain the word "aggression", but there is also no word "liberation". Such words could not be there. The plans of the Soviet command **were neither aggressive nor liberating**. They were **offensive** and nothing more. Any army (especially the army of a great world power) is created precisely in order to defeat (or at least significantly

weaken) the armed forces of the enemy. The offensive was, is and will be the most effective way to solve this problem. Paragraph 10 of the Field Charter of the Red Army (*"only a decisive offensive in the main direction, culminating in encirclement and relentless pursuit, leads to the complete destruction of the enemy's forces and means"*) is not connected either with the "world revolution", Stalin's foreign policy plans. This (and similar) paragraph is simply reasonable. It concentrates the centuries-old experience of military art. The enemy must be destroyed or forced to surrender.

neither

was

aggressive

predatory

What to do later with this enemy, with his territory, with his material and production resources, with the remnants of his army - this is already a matter of politics. A question for the solution of which the operational principles of warfare have absolutely no significance. Not only aggressive, but also not wanting anything else but peace and tranquility, the state must strive to ensure that victory is won with "little bloodshed", with minimal destruction of its own territory and minimal casualties among its own population. There was and is no other way to this ideal, except for a decisive offensive with the aim of "defeating the enemy on his own territory". **The ultimate and invariable aggressiveness of the Stalinist empire** found its expression and confirmation not in the Charters and the system of combat training of the Red Army, but in real acts of aggression, international robbery, brazen interference in the affairs of sovereign countries, some of

which have already been mentioned in previous chapters. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey. Here is a list that gives an unambiguous answer to the question of the real, i.e., great-power and aggressive, orientation

Stalin's plans. On the state emblem of the USSR, the hammer and sickle covered the entire globe, on which globe the boundaries of the “worker-peasant state” were not marked even by the thinnest line. And this simple symbolism was not at all accidental.

Chapter

2.8 Summary and Discussion

The armed aggression of the Soviet Union against Finland, which began on November 30, 1939, ended with the signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty on March 12, 1940. Not only because of the circumstances of its conclusion (Stalin refused to suspend the offensive of the Red Army, at least for the period of negotiations), but also in its content this treaty was nothing more than an act of international robbery and extortion, incompatible with the generally recognized norms of law. Vast territories separated by hundreds or even thousands of kilometers from Leningrad were forcibly taken away from Finland (the strengthening of the defense capability of which was retroactively announced as the main reason that “forced” Stalin to carry out an armed attack on a deliberately weak neighbor).

From a formal legal point of view, **the Moscow Treaty of March 12, 1940 is almost no different from the Armistice Agreement between France and Germany, signed in the Compiègne Forest on June 24, 1940.** The clause “almost” refers only to the fact that the question of whether who (Germany or France) was the aggressor, and who was the victim of aggression, allows different interpretations. Strictly speaking, it was France that declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, and it was the French troops who were the first to cross the border (September 9) and invaded the adjacent territory of Germany. Yes, the Nuremberg Tribunal rejected such casuistry and found Germany guilty of unleashing a war in Europe, including a war against France. Nevertheless, the topic for a purely abstract discussion remains. In the case of the 1st Soviet-Finnish war (“winter war”), everything is very clear: Finland did not attack, did not threaten, and could not - due to the difference in size - threaten the mighty Soviet Union, whose army outnumbered all the male population of the Suomi country (including infants and decrepit old people).

In modern Germany, there is hardly a far-right, revanchist extremist group that has the audacity to demand the "return" of Paris and Orleans, while referring to the terms of the 1940 Armistice Agreement. Well, in France, only a few of those who, during the years of occupation, accused De Gaulle, Free France, and anti-fascist resistance fighters of violating the "truce" with the invaders, escaped criminal punishment. These inspiring examples, in my opinion, should have kept Russian historians from resenting with an air of offended innocence that not all citizens and not all leaders of Finland considered themselves morally obligated to comply with the terms of the Moscow Treaty of March 12, 1940.

However, from the spring of 1940 to the spring of 1941, the question of how the leadership of Finland relates to the Moscow Treaty still had no practical significance. **The main and determining situation was how the leadership of the USSR treated this treaty.** This question is the subject of the second part of our book.

Facts, both relatively new and long known, testify to the fact that **in Moscow the Moscow Peace Treaty was perceived as a temporary, forced and unfortunate stop** on the way to the complete annexation of Finland. Already the uncereceremonious seizure of the plant in Enso, carried out by armed means 10 days after the signing of the treaty, gave a clear example of what awaits Finland in the near future. Threats and claims, in no way based on the letter and meaning of the peace treaty, rained down one after another. Transit of military cargo in Hanko, ultimatum demands for the resignation of Finnish government ministers and interference in the presidential elections, the destruction of the Kaleva passenger plane, demands to "return" the rolling stock of the Finnish railways to the Soviet Union and stop the construction of defensive structures "on the Helsingfors direction", systematic violation of borders Soviet reconnaissance aircraft - all this spoke with the utmost frankness of Stalin's obvious unwillingness to establish peaceful, good-neighborly relations with Finland, which he had devastated.

Documents that became available in the early 1990s showed that the numerous facts of "pressing" Finland mentioned above served not only the purposes of psychological pressure on the country's leadership, but also directly prepared a second attempt at invasion and occupation. The operational plans of the high command of the Red Army, developed in the fall of 1940, **clearly and directly set the task of the complete occupation of the entire territory of Finland (including the capital of the state of Helsinki), the complete defeat and destruction of the Finnish army.** The text of the directives of the Soviet command leaves no doubt that the implementation of these plans was not made in any way dependent on the possible appearance on the territory of Finland of a foreign (in the real conditions of that time - German) army, capable of creating a threat to Leningrad. Rather, on the contrary, it was precisely the situation that had arisen that Finland had no military allies that was seen as a particularly favorable moment that should have been used. It is also noteworthy that in the text of the "Considerations" and "Directives" of the high command of the Red Army there was no place **for at least formal reservations that invasion plans were being developed "in case Finland violates the terms of the peace treaty."** And in this sense, the Soviet plans differed markedly from Hitler's plan "Barbarossa", which nevertheless stated that *"all orders that will be given by the commanders-in-chief on the basis of this directive must absolutely definitely proceed from the fact that we are talking about precautionary measures on that case, if Russia changes its current position in relation to us.* Taking into account the content of the operational plans of the Soviet command, such facts as the

deployment of mobile railway artillery batteries of special power on the Khanko Peninsula or the creation of the notorious "Society for Peace and Friendship with the USSR", which - to the great displeasure of the Moscow "curators" - and failed to *"break the backbone of the Finnish bourgeoisie"* (although it managed to launch a destabilization campaign with bloody street riots and casualties). The documents of the leadership of the Comintern and the "Moscow leading core" of the Finnish

Communist parties extremely frankly and unambiguously set the task of *"turning Finland into a Soviet republic"* and granting the Finnish people *"such freedom and independence as the peoples of the Karelian-Finnish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian Soviet republics have."* In the light of such documents and plans, the decisions of the Soviet leadership, paradoxical at first glance, on the creation of the "Karelo-Finnish" Union Republic, on the completely artificial planting of the Finnish language in it, unknown to the absolute majority of the population, on the "evening courses" of Finnish literacy for the party nomenclature become clear and paradoxical at first glance. this stillborn "reserve Finland" ... "God does not give

horns to a vigorous cow." This, rather rude, folk saying extremely briefly and accurately describes the entire history of the Soviet-Finnish confrontation in 1939-1940. In March 1940, the vague threat of armed intervention by the Anglo-French bloc alarmed Stalin to such an extent that he decided to temporarily suspend the final reprisal against recalcitrant Finland. In the autumn of 1940, Germany's barely visible interest in Finnish nickel and the "Finnish transport corridor" forced Stalin to stop halfway through practical preparations for the "final solution" of the Finnish question. The head of the USSR Government himself was sent to Berlin to sort things out with a former accomplice in robbery, which accomplice, who had gained strength and impudence over a year, was rapidly turning into the main enemy.

During the negotiations held on November 12–13, 1940, an absolute discrepancy between the positions of the parties on the Finnish question was revealed. Hitler categorically objected to a new war in Finland, Molotov, referring to the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939 on the division of spheres of interest in Eastern Europe, insisted on his "right" to occupy Finland without postponing this matter for a year or half a year (*" why should Russia delay the implementation of her plans for six months or a year? After all, the German-Russian agreement did not contain any time limits and within their spheres of influence, neither side's hands are tied"*).

Of course, from the point of view of observing the terms of the August (1939) deal, Molotov was absolutely right. But us in this

the question is not of interest to Stalin-Hitler's "showdown on concepts", but the attitude of the USSR leadership to the Moscow peace treaty with Finland, the existence of which Molotov never remembered, but the intention to "liquidate" this treaty (together with independent **Finland**) **was expressed with the utmost clarity** (*"Answering a question from the Fuhrer, he stated that he envisions a settlement within the same framework as in Bessarabia and neighboring countries"*). After the completion of the Berlin talks in Moscow, they had to reckon with the fact that a new war

with Finland would lead to a serious aggravation of relations with Germany. Strictly speaking, this statement meant little in practice. From the expression of displeasure to armed resistance is a huge distance. Molotov, for example, repeatedly told the Germans that *"the appearance of any foreign troops on the territory of Bulgaria will be considered as a violation of the security interests of the USSR."* Despite these completely unequivocal warnings, on March 1, 1941, Germany "attached" Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact and sent its troops into its territory. On the part of Moscow, in response to this clearly unfriendly step by Germany, expressions

Nothing significant, except for public
"diplomatic concern", did not follow. At the beginning of

1941, Germany's ability to provide armed support to Finland was, in fact, negligible. On the territory of Finland itself, there were no German troops in numbers worthy of attention and mention at all. The grouping of German troops in Norway was by no means inactive, but solved the tasks of defending the coast (with a total length of more than 1.5 thousand km) from a possible English landing, the threat of which had an extremely strong effect on Hitler. On March 4, 1941, two cruisers and five destroyers of the British fleet, without suspecting it, actively intervened in the intricacies of the Soviet-German-Finnish contradictions. The British shelled the Norwegian port and city of Svolvær, sank several merchant ships and captured 220 German sailors and Wehrmacht soldiers. On March 12, this raid became the subject of discussion by the German High Command, during which Hitler further reduced the strength of the army "Norway",

which were previously allowed to be involved in Operation Barbarossa. Even less realistic would be an attempt to launch an offensive on the western borders of the USSR in a situation of winter-spring 1941, i.e., when the strategic concentration of German troops in the east not only had not been completed, but practically had

not yet begun. Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership did not dare to conduct a military operation in the winter of 1941. The guns on the Finnish border were silent. The lack of documentary sources does not allow us to indicate the specific reasons for this "non-aggression". Let us repeat once again that the documents of the Red Army command for the period from the beginning of 1941 to June 22 were removed from the available archival funds. On the other hand, the development of invasion plans (within the general framework of the "Directive" of November 25, 1940) continued, as evidenced by both the field trips conducted in Karelia by the commands of the Leningrad, Ural and Oryol military districts, and planned by the General Staff of the Red Army for early May 1941 d. an operational-strategic game with the participation of the command and headquarters of the Leningrad and Arkhangelsk districts (that is, the future Northwestern and Northern fronts in the

categories of "Directives" of November 25, 1940). Be that as it may, but 1941 began with new attempts at the economic and political "pressure" of Finland (rupture of the trade agreement, cessation of grain supplies, "nickel crisis"). As expected, the result turned out to be exactly the opposite of the plan. The Finnish leadership, secretly informed by Berlin about the course and results of Molotov's negotiations with Hitler, took an extremely tough position, and the attempt at blackmail, this time not supported by a real readiness to start a war, failed miserably. On the other hand, the crisis of January-February 1941 inevitably led to even closer economic and then political rapprochement between Finland and Germany. In general, the actions of the Stalinist leadership in the "Finnish direction" of the foreign policy of the USSR in the period from the spring of 1940 to the spring of 1941 should be assessed as a **complete failure of a strategic scale. Finland was neither "reunited" with the Soviet "Karelo Finland" nor turned into a peaceful, friendly neighbor.**

April - May 1941 was a turning point in the history of World War II and the Soviet-German confrontation as one of the main factors determining the course of this war. Despite the fact that historians cannot yet give exact dates and quote fundamental documents, a lot of "indirect evidence" allows us to assume with a high degree of certainty that it was in May 1941 in Moscow that the decision was made to start a large-scale war against Germany, and not once then in the indefinite future, and in July - August 1941. From the moment such a decision was made, Soviet-Finnish relations receded into the second (if not tenth) plan in the face of impending grandiose events. The intention to concentrate the main forces on one German front, limiting itself to defense in the north (on the border with Finland), was certainly correct (and the only possible one, taking into account the need to create a significant numerical superiority in the West). In the new situation that had arisen, Comrade Stalin was no longer up to "turning Finland into a Soviet republic." First of all, it was necessary *to "defeat the main forces of the German army" and "take possession of the territory of former Poland and East Prussia."* After the victory over Germany, the rapid increase in the number of "fraternal union republics" would become inevitable and inevitable.

At the same time, in the late spring of 1941, German-Finnish relations began to change qualitatively. This question has been carefully clouded and deliberately distorted by the efforts of two generations of Soviet (and now Russian) historians. Nevertheless, it is not so difficult to sort out this heap and get out of it the pearl grain of real events and facts. **As of June 25, 1941, there was no public, open agreement between Finland and Germany.** Between these two countries, normal diplomatic relations were maintained - but nothing more. Between Finland and Germany there was neither a non-aggression pact (the German proposal to conclude such an agreement was rejected by the Finnish side in the spring of 1939), nor a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance (similar to the one that was concluded between the USSR and Kuusinen's "people's government"). Finland did not join the Tripartite Pact and did not (unlike the Soviet Union) negotiate such

accession. Thus, from a formally legal point of view, **interstate relations between Germany and Finland were at a much lower level than relations between Germany and the USSR.** Between the last two, a "Treaty of Friendship and Border" was concluded; the German foreign minister, as Hitler's plenipotentiary, twice visited Moscow, where he held official negotiations with the participation of Molotov and Stalin; The head of the Soviet government, Molotov, visited Berlin, where he conducted quite official negotiations with Hitler. Nothing of the kind, nothing even close to similar, happened between Berlin and Helsinki. Does it make sense to discuss the issue of the presence or absence

of official, public agreements? With regard to Hitler's Germany and Stalin's empire, no. Both dictators were

ready at any moment to tear up any international treaty, like a miserable piece of paper, and "public opinion" in either totalitarian state could meet such a decision of the leader (Führer) exclusively and only with "hot, unanimous approval." Finland in the summer of 1941 remained a democratic state, with a president and parliament elected by the people. Such power in such a state would be bound by the presence of an openly concluded treaty of alliance with Germany. But there was no such agreement. Was there a secret agreement between Finland and Germany on a military-political alliance? This is a very important question.

In the real situation of the European war that is already blazing for the second year, perhaps more

significant than the question of the existence of an open, publicly concluded agreement. **Such a secret agreement was sought.**

Searched with great care. And not in the blessed era of "glasnost and perestroika", but immediately after the end of the war between Finland and the USSR in the fall of 1944. Under the terms of the Armistice Agreement, the "warmongers" were to be brought to justice. And since Finland was not forced to surrender, and the Soviet Union acted only as one of the "allied powers" with which Finland concluded an armistice agreement, evidence was needed to try the leaders of Finland. Trial Ryti and

Tanner in the style of the infamous "Moscow trials" of 1936, Stalin could not. We needed documents and facts confirming a secret alliance with Hitler. They searched and found nothing.

The search was greatly facilitated by the fact of the complete defeat and unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. The archives of the Nazi "Reich" were at the disposal of the winners. In April 1945, Yuryo (Yuri) Leino, a communist, son-in-law of Comrade Kuusinen, became the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Finland. Under the "roof" of the Allied Control Commission, Finland was flooded by employees of the Soviet special services. It came to abductions and secret removal of Finnish citizens from the country to the Lefortovo prison of the NKVD. Nevertheless, **no traces of a secret intergovernmental agreement between Berlin and Helsinki could be found.** This discouraging fact leads "historians" of a particular orientation to do exactly what they are doing

to this day. From complete hopelessness, the scientists of the scientific school of the father and son Baryshnikov on dozens of pages talk about how glorious Soviet intelligence officers overheard a conversation in a restaurant in the city of Helsinki, during which a prominent political figure X, in a fair amount of drunkenness, said: "Yes, I can't stand these ryussi!"

To which his companion, the famous General Y, famously knocking over the eighth glass of tea, replied: "I still dream of living to see the day when the Germans drive the damned Russ beyond the Urals, into the taiga to the bears!"

"A-ah-ah-ah-ah!!! You see, - Russian historians of the Soviet spill comment on this drunken chatter, - during a meeting held at the Z Hotel, representatives of the high command of the Finnish army and reactionary parliamentary circles decided to seek an agreement with Germany, on the basis of which the Finnish military dreamed of occupying the territory of the Soviet Union from Ladoga to the Urals ... "It is a pity that no one has yet written such a voluminous study of topics and verbatim expressions in which Soviet-Finnish relations were discussed at officer drinking parties on the other side of the border ... All this would be funny - if the authors of such "scientific works" would writing scripts for children's cartoons, rather than trying to pass off their crudely crafted "order" for historical research.

In order to find out how the Finns after the "winter war" relate to "Russia", it was not at all worth spending budget money to pay for agents. The Finnish people fiercely hated Stalin and the Stalinist empire. He hated, dreamed of revenge and revenge. Nor is it surprising that in some minds (all the more heated by alcohol) such sentiments could sometimes be transformed into hatred for the Russian people as such. In war, as in war. However, Mannerheim, Talvela and other generals of the "old guard", participants in the civil war of 1918-1921, could hardly fail to understand that the Russian people themselves were the first and main victim of the Stalinist regime. However, hatred of Stalin and a military-political alliance with Hitler formalized by mutual obligations are two very different categories. Churchill, for example, hated

the Bolsheviks and Comrade Stalin personally no less than Mannerheim. All this by no means led Churchill to an alliance with Hitler, moreover, it did not even prevent him from entering into an alliance with Stalin in a situation where such an alliance became necessary to save the British Empire. Baron Mannerheim, a refined and arrogant aristocrat, despised and hated the "brown" upstarts no less than the "reds". In the spring of 1939, after the occupation of the Czech Republic, in a letter to his sister Eva, he writes: *"We were indignant and indignant at the actions of the Russians, but this is only child's play compared to Adolfus, the head of his Cheka, Himmler, and his beloved assistants ... They just want to turn the peoples of Europe into white blacks to serve the Third Reich... We are facing the end of the world..."* (68) Fortunately, the end of the world did not come that time. In particular, because the personal sympathies and real actions of responsible politicians did not always coincide. In our opinion,

the most meaningful research method is not endless attempts to extract the hidden meaning from overheard conversations and intercepted letters, but an analysis of **real events, real facts of cooperation between the German and Finnish armies**. Such cooperation undoubtedly existed. It is equally obvious that real actions should have been preceded by negotiations between the military, joint work of the command and staffs. Without this, it would be impossible not only

joint warfare, but also a simple redeployment of German troops from Norway and Germany to Finland. By a strange irony

of fate, a group of military men led by the Chief of the General Staff of the Finnish Army, General Heinrichs, flew from Helsinki to Salzburg at the very hours (on the evening of May 24, 1941) when a meeting of the country's top military-political leadership with the command of the western districts was held in Stalin's office. During three days of negotiations with the German generals, including the chief of staff of the operational leadership, Colonel General A. Jodl, the Finns were informed about the specific content of the operational plans for the war on the northern flank of the Soviet-German front. No documents and joint decisions were made; moreover, Heinrichs did not have the authority to sign any agreements (22, 26, 65).

On June 3, two German colonels arrived in Helsinki for a meeting with Heinrichs: the chief of staff of the army "Norway" Buschenhagen and the representative of the headquarters of the High Command Kinzel. The chief of staff of the army with the rank of colonel is hardly the level at which military alliances between the two states could be concluded. On July 6, in the German city of Kiel, a meeting of naval commanders was held, at which Germany was represented by Vice Admiral Schmudt, and Finland by Commodore Sundman. Neither official nor secret agreements were concluded during these meetings (at least they were never discovered). According to the version set out in Mannerheim's memoirs, the Finnish

The party then refused to assume any obligations:

"From his (Buschenhagen) statements to the General Staff, it became clear that this time his task was, on the one hand, to negotiate the practical details of possible cooperation in the event that the USSR attacked Finland, and on the other hand, to obtain guarantees that that Finland will act in the war as an ally of Germany. I informed the President of the Republic about this, and he assured that his position remains the same. After which I informed Colonel Buschenhagen that we could not give any guarantees regarding entry into the war. Finland has decided to remain neutral unless attacked" (22, p. 372).

Neither confirm nor refute this version with any documentary evidence so far failed. Nevertheless, the real course of further events clearly indicates that **the parties did not limit themselves to mutual information alone**. This conclusion is confirmed by **the redeployment of German troops to Finland, which began on June 7, 1941**.

The SS motorized brigade "Nord" was the first to cross the border between Norway and Finland. By June 6, the brigade was concentrated in the area of the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, and then along the "Arctic highway" Petsamo - Rovaniemi reached the concentration area in three days. The 169th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht during June 5–14 was transferred by sea from Germany to the Finnish port of Oulu, and from there it was transported by rail to the Rovaniemi region. The SS Nord brigade, the 169th Infantry Division and the units attached to them (including a tank battalion armed with captured French tanks) were consolidated into the 36th Army Corps (36 AK), which was to advance along the Salla - Alakurtti - Kandalaksha line. Until the morning of June 22, 1941, 36th AK was **the only formation of German ground forces in Finland**. The only one. On the morning of June 22, the mountain

rifle corps of General Dittl (2nd and 3rd mountain rifle divisions) crossed the Norwegian border, took control of Petsamo and began advancing to the area near the Soviet-Finnish border that was the starting point for the attack on Murmansk. Thus, by June 25, 1941, there were already four German divisions in northern Finland. **The only division of the Wehrmacht in**

southern Finland (163rd Infantry) received an order to move out of Oslo, Norway, only on June 26, 1941. **after the start of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war**. The division was stationed in Joensuu and included in the reserve of the Finnish Army High Command (65, pp. 169–171). These are the facts.

Based on these facts, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, until the turn of May - June 1941, the situation was quite multivariate. There were no binding agreements (even if secret, even if signed at the level of colonels and generals) between Germany and Finland. Secondly, and this is incomparably more significant, **the Finnish army was the main military force on the territory of Finland.** It was precisely this circumstance that was of decisive importance in the situation that developed in Europe in the second year of the World War. Two (later four) German divisions deployed in the Arctic were separated from southern Finland (i.e., from / 10 of the capital of the state, main industrial centers and population) by a ⁹ thousand-kilometer space, moreover, north of the Kemi-Rovaniemi-Salla railway line, among the deserted forest-tundra, stretched one single road. There was no question of any military, forceful pressure of the Germans on the Finnish leadership in such a situation. Moreover, the entire supply of the

group of German troops (from food to ammunition) rested on communications passing through the territory controlled by the Finnish army. Local resources (in other words, village peasants, from whom it was possible to take food by force in quantities sufficient to provide for a 50,000-strong group of troops) were absent in northern Finland. Even in the presence of an alliance (explicit or covert) with Finland, the supply of German troops in the Arctic was a huge problem. The only motor road from Rovaniemi to Petsamo was 530 km long, and the German tank trucks on this route used up almost as much gasoline as they could transport (65, p. 173). In reality, German troops in the Arctic could only solve the task for which they were deployed: to occupy the Petsamo region with the consent of the Finnish leadership and try to capture Murmansk and Kandalaksha. There was no question of any decisive influence of this extremely small group of troops on the adoption of political decisions in Helsinki. In this regard, Finland was (in reality, and not in connection with some paper agreements) in a qualitatively different position than

Germany's Eastern European allies (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria). Territories of these countries by 22

June 1941, or were already actually occupied by the Wehrmacht, or could be occupied by German troops at any moment. The example of Yugoslavia, which at the beginning of April 1941 tried to withdraw from the Tripartite Pact, showed very clearly what Hitler's reaction would be to the very first signs of disobedience.

Every medal has two sides. The fundamental fact mentioned above (the main military force in Finland was the Finnish army) testifies to at least two circumstances. On the one hand, **the decision to enter the war against the Soviet Union was made in Helsinki, and it is the Finnish leadership that is responsible for it.** In this sense, one cannot agree with the concept of "a log carried by a stream" put forward by a number of Finnish historians. It was precisely at the end of the spring of 1941, precisely at the moment when the two totalitarian dictatorships were preparing to grab each other at the throat, that Finland had a certain opportunity for political maneuver, for making independent decisions. On the other hand, precisely because the key decisions were

made not in Berlin, but in Helsinki, the **Soviet leadership had a real opportunity to negotiate with the Finnish government and ensure peace on the Finnish border by peaceful means.** Molotov did not need Hitler at all as a "mediator" in negotiations with Ryti and Mannerheim. It was enough to have good will and desire. And these are by no means belated projects of an amateur. Comrade Stalin himself formulated one of the possible ways to solve the problem as follows:

"The USSR attaches great importance to the question of the neutralization of Finland and its withdrawal from Germany ... In this case, the Soviet Government could make some territorial concessions to Finland in order to pacify the latter and conclude a new peace treaty with it" (173. p. 3) . Great offer. A true

example of state wisdom, which subjugates petty considerations of personal ambitions and the notorious "image". Unfortunately, Comrade Stalin announced his readiness to *"make some territorial concessions"* and conclude a *"new peace treaty"* with Finland (in a letter to US President F. Roosevelt) only on August 4, 1941.

where the Finnish troops were on August 4, 1941, we will talk in the last part of this book. In the meantime, let's note the main thing: on the eve of the start of the Soviet-German war in Moscow, **not the slightest attempt was made to "pacify" Finland.** As for the "friendly gestures" (such as the replacement of the ambassador in Helsinki and the generous, albeit belated, promise to resume grain deliveries), which brought Paasikivi, then ambassador to Moscow and some of today's Finnish historians, to such tenderness, the leaders of Finland, of course, do not agreed to consider this a worthy compensation for the aggression of the "winter war" and the predatory terms of the Moscow peace treaty.

In the spring of 1941, it was decided to ensure the stability of the northern flank of the common front of the Red Army not by diplomatic, but by military means. active defense. The top military and political leadership of the USSR decided that 15 rifle divisions and two mechanized corps of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) would be quite enough to *"neutralize Finland."* Actually, back in April 1940, Comrade Stalin explained to himself and his generals that "the offensive of the Finns is not worth a penny." Speaking with a closing speech at a meeting of the top command staff of the Red Army, he said: "... *The Finnish army is very passive in defense, and it looks at the defense line of the fortified area like the*

Mohammedans look at Allah. Fools sit in pillboxes and don't come out, they think that they can't cope with the pillboxes, they sit and drink tea ... Like the offensive of the Finns, it's not worth a penny. Here are three months of fighting, do you remember at least one case of a serious mass offensive by the Finnish army? This never happened... They very rarely went on the counterattack, and I do not know of a single case where they did not fail in the counterattacks. As for any serious offensive to break through our front, to occupy some line, you will not see a single such fact. The Finnish army is not capable of great offensive actions ... "

The subordinates understood the hint. And now, in the intelligence report of the headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps (Leningrad VO), signed by the chief of staff of the corps on June 29, 1941, paragraph 8 appears, dedicated to

"the political and moral state of the enemy." The situation is simply deplorable:

"The political and moral state of the soldiers of the Finnish army for 40-41 years. dropped sharply. There are frequent cases of violation of discipline (drunkenness, unauthorized absences, bickering, failure to follow orders, etc.), great dissatisfaction with poor nutrition and lengthening of the service life. In addition, the soldiers are greatly influenced by the general difficult economic situation of the working population and the tense political situation caused by the defeat in the last war and the reactionary course of the

ruling clique" (190). Was it worth worrying about the stability of the defense of the troops of the Leningrad District when they faced such a morally decomposed enemy? As for the possible breakthrough of German troops through the Baltic states and the line of the Ostrov-Pskov fortified areas to the southern suburbs of Leningrad, such a situation was not even discussed. *"Everyone then was firmly convinced,"* A.A. Novikov, - *that the troops of the district will have to act only on the Soviet-Finnish border, from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland. No one in those days even imagined that events would turn out very differently very soon.* In this case, Novikov's memory did not fail. During the operational strategic game conducted by the General Staff of the Red Army in January 1941, the "Western" had the task of reaching the Western Dvina on the 30th day of the offensive. But the "Eastern", of course, did not allow them to do this either, and the "Western" did not advance further than the Kaunas-Siauliai line (and the "Western" went to this line from the borders of East Prussia for 10 days). Only in a nightmare Stalin could imagine a situation where on the 5th day of the war the Germans cross the Western Dvina, and on the 18th day they take Pskov ... With firm confidence in the invincible power of his army, Stalin with a brisk step led the country to the greatest catastrophe in its history.

Part 3

Ten days of the summer of 41st

Chapter

3.1 Tuesday, June 17

In that terrible year, June 17th fell on a Tuesday. A typical summer day. The headlines of the central Soviet newspapers breathed serenity, very close to boredom. An editorial in Izvestia entitled "On collective farm consumer goods and local initiative." Next come the articles "Results of the implementation of the new loan" and "The trade union-Komsomol cross-country has begun." Some animation was found only on the last page. Where the impassioned appeal of the leadership of Glavkonserva was published: "Return empty glass jars and bottles!" Against the backdrop of this peaceful grace, the headlines of the second page of the issue, dedicated to the events of life abroad, looked especially contrasting: "War in Europe", "War in Syria", "War in Africa", "Bombing of Cyprus and Gibraltar", "Military measures of the United States". Each reader could thus visually appreciate the fruits of the wise, unfailingly peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

It was on this day, June 17, 1941, that the 1st Panzer Division from the 1st Mechanized Corps of the Leningrad Military District, raised on combat alert, began loading into echelons leaving for the polar Alakurtti to "perform a special task" (175) . The exact text of the order (named in the report of the commander of the 1st MK *"personal order of the chief of staff of the LVO, Major General Nikishev"*), unfortunately, is unknown. This document could not be found in the archives of the 1st Mechanized Corps (f. 3422) and the 1st Panzer Division (f. 3000). Strictly speaking, the only written confirmation of the most important circumstance that the words "combat", "combat alert" were used in the order are the memoirs of the commander of the 1st Panzer Division V.I. Baranov (*"tankers raised the day before on combat alert were at the loading docks of the railway, where they put their cars on platforms ..."*) (186). However, in this case - as in many others - the real facts are no less eloquent than paper documents.

A clear confirmation of the fact that already on June 17, 1941, the 1st Panzer began to carry out a **combat mission** can be a picture of the state in which the 1st TD left its permanent deployment in the village of Strugi Krasnye near Pskov. Colonel General I.M. Olushko (in those days a lieutenant who had just graduated from the Kiev Tank School) describes in his memoirs what he saw when he arrived at the former camp of the 1st Panzer Division:

*"Except for the foreman, who introduced himself as the head of the tank fleet, there was no one else here ... The remaining tanks - 20 BT-5 and BT-7 units - were considered to be mothballed. I examined them and only gasped: some without gearboxes, others without batteries, some had machine guns removed ... When asked what all this meant, the foreman replied that the regiment, alerted (emphasized by me. - **M.S.**), took everything that could be put on the move ...*

" (187) This is what is called: in war as in war. By peacetime standards, 20 abandoned, dismantled tanks is a crime. But the command of the 1st Panzer already on June 17, 1941 knew that peacetime for him and for the units entrusted to him was over. And this meant that it was necessary to load onto railway platforms without losing a single extra minute, ruthlessly disassembling faulty tanks for spare parts. The work was huge: the division had 372 tanks, 53 armored vehicles, 12 of the latest 152-mm ML-20 cannons weighing seven tons each, 1.5 thousand vehicles for various purposes, more than 10 thousand people, hundreds of tons of fuel and ammunition. All this had to be loaded onto trains and sent to the area of the new deployment. It is difficult to say how long such a large-scale work would take in our time. Unbelievable, but true - on the night of June 19, the first echelons had already left the loading station. They arrived at Alakurtti station on the evening of June 22. The last two echelons were loaded on the afternoon of June 24 (that is, two days after the start of the Soviet-German war) and arrived in the Arctic on June

26-27 (188). On June 17, on the very day when the 1st Panzer Division received the order to begin loading into the echelons leaving for the Arctic, the command staff of the 10th mechanized corps of the Leningrad Military District left for the exercises. The corps was based in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pavlovsk, Gatchina), but the district leadership decided to conduct command and staff exercises in the

"The exercises were designed for five days, that is, until 22.06. inclusive. But on June 21 at 09:00, the exercise was given a retreat, and the entire command staff was sent to Vyborg to analyze the exercise. After the analysis, it was ordered to immediately leave for their units" (191).

Active preparations for war also took place on the farthest sector of the future "Finnish front", on the Hanko Peninsula. On the eve of the war, Senior Sergeant S.V. Tirkeltaub served in the communications battalion of the 8th Osb. In his memoirs he writes:

"... On June 2, 41, the commander of the Leningrad Military District, M.M., arrived at Khanko. Popov. In the hall of the former city government, all officers were gathered, from company commanders and older. They were informed (and this immediately became an open secret) about the possibility of an attack by Germany and Finland on the Soviet Union. On the same day, the command of the naval base announced the cancellation of vacations for military personnel and other relevant measures ... On the morning of June 19, another combat alarm sounded in the battalion, this time it turned out to be not a training one at all ... We were put on cars and sent to the line of defense. We never returned to our barracks on Hanko. The order immediately followed to lay out the telephone lines and begin duty. On the morning of June 20, the foreman handed out live ammunition and grenades. This has never happened before ... At the first hour of the night on June 22, sirens howled throughout the peninsula, tanks and trucks rumbled. Phones that had been silent for three days woke up. Signalers transmitted reports to the headquarters: such and such a battalion occupied the line of defense, such and such a company took up its starting position ..." (189) The memoirs of the sergeant basically coincide with the memoirs of the most important chief for the Hanko naval base - People's Commissar of the Navy of the USSR Admiral N.G. Kuznetsova. Referring, however, to the story of the naval commander

Khanko S.I. Kabanov, Admiral Kuznetsov writes:

"Late on the evening of June 19, a Soviet soldier arrived across the border in Hanko. plenipotentiary in Finland S.I. Zotov.

He said that we should expect the outbreak of war with Germany and Finland, and that two Nazi divisions were already unloading in the port of Turku. Without declaring an alarm, I ordered the 335th Rifle Regiment and one battalion of the 343rd Artillery Regiment to be raised, and with these units to occupy the combat area without noise before dawn and

firing positions at the line of land defense. During the 20th and on the night of June 21, all the forces of the base, by order of the Military Council, were brought to full combat

readiness. On June 20, the diesel-electric ship "Joseph Stalin" arrived in Hanko from Leningrad, which, according to the schedule, was supposed to leave on the same day on the return flight. The complexity of the situation forced the diesel-electric ship to be delayed. On the first day of the war with Germany (in fact, loading began on June 21, but the ship left the shore at 18:00 on June 22. - M.S.) about 6,000 women and children were

evacuated from Hanko to Tallinn" (192, p. 107). There is one very strange detail in the text cited above: "The Soviet plenipotentiary in Finland, S.I. Zotov, arrived across the border in Hanko." Firstly, S.I. Zotov, two months before the events described, ceased to be plenipotentiary and was recalled from Helsinki. Secondly, since when did employees of the diplomatic department (and even crossing the border!) transmit operational information to military and naval commanders? For many months of the existence of the Hanko naval base, stable radio contact was maintained with it. In extreme cases, for the personal transmission of top-secret information, it was possible to send a messenger on a warship (2-3 hours of travel) or on an airplane (20 minutes of flight). There was an airfield on Hanko, and two squadrons of the 13th Fighter Aviation Regiment of the KBF Air Force were based there. True, in modern publications there are reports that everything was much simpler, and the "feat of a scout" had a completely ordinary reason: "Orlov and the military attaché of the USSR in Finland, Captain 2nd rank Taradin, took their

families who were in one of the dachas on the territory of Hanko". In any case, the command of the naval base of Hanko did not learn about the imminent start of the war from the "plenipotentiary representative" running across the border. It was on that day, June 19, 1941, that it was Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov ordered the transfer of the Baltic, Northern

The specific content of the activities carried out in the "Operational readiness No. 2" mode was determined as early as June 23, 1939 by the directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy No. 9760. The fleet, on this command,

went into the following state : sea;

- the composition of the fleet in the ranks in peacetime at 6:00 readiness for entry into hostilities; - repair of ships is being accelerated; - patrol is carried out at all bases and systematic aerial reconnaissance is carried out at sea; – Aviation is dispersed at operational

airfields” (106, p. 515). The most amazing details of the last peaceful days are found in the memoirs of the commander of the Leningrad district, M.M. Popov. First of all, it should be noted that we may incorrectly indicate the position of Lieutenant General M.M. Popov. Was he still the commander of the Leningrad Military District on June 20, 1941, or was he already the Northern Front? The exact answer to this question is very important. Fronts in the Soviet Union were never created in peacetime (the Far Eastern Front deployed since the late 1930s can only serve as an example of an “exception that proves the rule” - the border with Japan-occupied China continuously flared up either large or small armed conflicts). The deployment of fronts near the western borders of the USSR always preceded the imminent start of hostilities. So it was in September 1939 (before the invasion of Poland), and in January 1940 (at the beginning of the second phase of the "winter war"), and in June 1940 (on the eve of the "liberation" of Bessarabia and Bukovina).

The date of the creation of the Northern Front (June 24, 1941) adopted in Soviet historiography is a clear disinformation. Stored in TsAMO (f. 217, op. 1221, d. 183, l. 1) “Operative report No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front” **was signed at 22:00 on June 22, 1941**. It is possible that this time line (the evening of June 22) is not an exact designation of the moment of the transformation of the Leningrad Military District into the Northern Front. For more than 15 years, it has been known for certain that on June 19–21, 1941, fronts were described in secret documents as real units. So, in a telegram from the Chief of the General Staff dated June 19, 1941, to the commander of the Kiev OVO, it was said: “*The People's Commissar of Defense ordered: by June 22, 1941, the department should go to Ternopil, leaving the district department subordinate to you in Kiev ... Separation and transfer of the **front management*** (underlined by me. - M.S.) sav

the strictest secrecy, about which to warn the staff of the headquarters of the district " (164, p. 87). **Another noteworthy document was drawn up in the neighboring Baltic district of Leningrad at 2:30 p.m. June 21, 1941. It sets the task "beginning tonight until further notice to introduce blackout in garrisons and troop locations."** This would not be surprising if it were not for the signature: **"Assistant Commander of the S-Z.f. Air Defense Colonel Karlin"** (193, p. 49). The earliest **known** mention of the words "Northern Front" is found in the text of the draft decision of the

Politburo of the Central Committee of the All - Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated June 21, 1941 , written by Malenkov (Secretary of the Central Committee, member of the Main Military Council) on June 21, 1941 : *in place ... Appoint Comrade Kuznetsov as a member of the Military Council* **of the Northern Front ...** " (121, p. 414) In these anxious days, when military leaders *"from company commanders and older"* were already guessing about the

imminent start of the war , Lieutenant General M.M. Popov, with a group of senior officers of the district, left Leningrad for the Arctic. For what? According to those written in 1964 and published in

1968 memoirs of General Popov, here's why:

"In the tenth of June, a directive was received from the People's Commissar of Defense, which appointed a large commission chaired by the commander of the Leningrad Military District with the task of selecting sites for the construction of airfields for basing fighter and bomber aircraft along the shores of the Barents Sea" (194, p. 35) . It's hard to believe this. More precisely, it is impossible. The commander

of the troops of the district (and not a simple district, but a district preparing to turn into an active front), the general, who was allowed to participate in the most secret Conference of the top command staff of the Red Army in Stalin's office on May 24, 1941, had many other things to do and concerns, besides in order to personally select suitable "sites for the construction of airfields" in the deserted tundra of the Kola Peninsula. Moreover, if you believe

memoirs of M.M. Popov, the expedition was supposed to last a whole month! And this is not a joke:

"By the end of our meeting, A. G. Golovko (Commander of the Northern Fleet) reported that the destroyer assigned to the commission for the selection of airfields on which I was supposed to go was ready to go to sea, and offered to clarify the time of this exit. The soul did not lie, as they say, for this parting with land for almost a month. However, it was impossible not to fulfill the directives of the People's Commissar, of course.

It is completely incomprehensible - where, in what seas, the "destroyer allocated for the commission for the selection of airfields" should have gone. For "almost a month's time" it was possible to reach Alaska and return. If it was about the "shores of the Barents Sea", that is, about the maximum transition from Murmansk to the northeastern tip of the Kola Peninsula, then for the destroyer (at an average speed of 20 knots) there is a one-day course ... Further

events (and the meeting M.M. Popov with Rear Admiral A.G. Golovko took place on June 20) developed as follows:

"... After some thought, it was found reasonable to report our moods by phone. And here is the Commissar on the wire. A short report on the situation on the land border, at sea and in the air, and a frank statement that under these conditions going to sea is inappropriate. "It's good that I called," the voice of the

people's commissar sounded in the receiver. - Let's put off going to sea for now. Return to Leningrad immediately." The army commander (commander of the 14th Army, Lieutenant-General V.A. Frolov) who was present at this conversation with the People's Commissar of the Navy and the commander saw some confirmation of our fears in the cancellation of going to sea ... " Strange. In the Northern

Fleet, operational readiness No. 2 was announced on June 19 at 17:00. This could (and should have) "confirmed the fears" to a much greater extent. The order of command at the level of People's Commissar of Defense looks a bit strange - the commander of one of the five border districts (or already fronts). *"I'm glad you called."* Fine. What if he didn't call? So would the commander sail away on a sea cruise for a month?

In Murmansk, after discussing the situation with the commander of the 14th Army, M.M. Popov made a decision, the meaning of which is to translate

into Russian is categorically impossible: "We

considered it absolutely necessary to extend our decision on the transition to the defense of troops in the Kandalaksha direction and to the troops intended to cover and defend the Murmansk direction and the coasts of the Rybachy and Kola peninsulas, which the commander really asked for and what he had permission has been given."

What does it mean? Firstly, it reports on the decision "*on the transition to the defense of troops in the Kandalaksha direction.*" And earlier, BEFORE the decision "on the transition to defense" was made, what other task did the "troops in the Kandalaksha direction" have? And if the decision "on the transition to the defensive" was indeed made (and some other decision with other tasks was canceled?), then why is it at these hours that the 1st Panzer Division, on the orders of the district command, begins a hasty redeployment from Pskov to Alakurtti? Further. If the troops of the 14th Army were intended "*to cover and defend the Murmansk direction*", then why did the commander have to "really ask" for permission to move to ... **defense?**

Return to Leningrad, described in the memoirs of M.M. Popov, also raises many questions:

"I was returning to Leningrad by the Polar Arrow train. Day 21 June, spent in the carriage, passed quietly.

*In Petrozavodsk, where we arrived **at about 4 a.m. on June 22** (hereinafter, it is underlined by me. - M.S.), in addition to the army commander (commander of the 7th Army), Lieutenant General F. D. Gorelenko, who was waiting for us, we met another **secretary Central Committee of the Karelian-Finnish SSR** and the head of the Kirov railway. First of all, they reported on the order received from Moscow: **unhook the commander's car from the train** and deliver it non-stop to Leningrad outside the schedule, for which a separate steam locomotive should be provided. This locomotive is already ready,*

*and in a few minutes you can go. The order for the urgent delivery of the commander's car to Leningrad, naturally, aroused concern and alertness in them. However, at that hour and in those minutes, **we could only assume that some events were brewing**, undoubtedly connected with the war. We could not explain anything to our comrades, and since the shunting locomotive was already pulling the car along the station tracks, we had to hastily tell about the situation and decisions,*

received in the north, i.e., in the sector of the 14th Army, and to suggest to the commander F. D. Gorelenko, in whose sector the Finnish units had already been advanced to the border, to urgently put the troops on combat readiness and occupy them

*with defense according to the cover plan. Corps Commissar Klementyev, a member of the Military Council, and I **racked our brains over** what this order to urgently deliver us to Leningrad meant The commandant, who appeared in the car with a gas mask on his left side, a symbol of combat readiness, introduced himself and reported that the stop was due to the need to check the axle boxes and would be very short, and then it was planned to follow to Leningrad without a single stop. But most importantly, he continued with noticeable excitement, about an hour ago, by intercom from Leningrad, **only for the information of the head of the station and the commandant**, a message was transmitted that the Germans had bombed a number of our cities and railway junctions in the west at about 4 o'clock in the morning and, after heavy artillery shelling, crossed border and invaded our territory ... " So, at 4 o'clock in the morning on June 22, 1941, the commander of the*

Leningrad district (already called the Northern Front in the documents of the supreme command) and the commander of one of the three armies of the front (F. D. Gorelenko) was still only "Puzzle their heads" that "some events are brewing." At the same time, for some reason, the commander does not sleep at 4 o'clock in the morning (for people leading a normal lifestyle, this is night). Comrade Kupriyanov, the secretary of the Karelian-Finnish Central Committee, does not sleep either, although for him the commander of the district is not a senior boss and Kupriyanov is absolutely not obliged to meet him at the train station. Further, at 7 am on June 22, the commander still does not have any reliable information about the war that began three hours ago and learns about it from the "commandant with a gas mask on his side." Moreover, the commandant of some tiny station has already been informed about the beginning of the war. Hour ago. And there is no district (front) commander

yet. Could all this be true? No, he can not. The famous directive of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 1 ("During June 22–23, 1941, a sudden attack by the Germans on the fronts of the LVO, PribOVO,

ZapOVO, KOVO, OdVO...) arrived at the headquarters of the Leningrad District at one in the morning on June 22, 1941 and was immediately brought to the attention of the commanders of the armies and corps. There are many proofs of this fact. Today it is already possible to specify exact archival references to documents. But we will not do this, but simply continue reading the memoirs of M.M. Popova: *"On the morning*

*of June 22, we returned to Leningrad ... General K. P. Pyadyshev, who met us at the station, briefly described the situation in the carriage. At about **1 o'clock in the morning, a directive from the People's Commissar was received**, warning that on June 22-23 an attack by Nazi troops on our country was possible. The directive required that the troops be put on alert and take up firing points in fortified areas on the state border. The district headquarters **was immediately assembled** on alert, and **appropriate instructions were sent to the troops ... "***

Thus, even if we assume such blatant slovenliness as the absence of radio communications and encryption devices in the district commander's car, then at least at 4 o'clock in the morning, after meeting with the commander of the 7th Army, General Gorelenko, Popov should have learned from him the contents of the Directive No. 1. After that, guessing was completely no need.

The reader carefully prepared by Soviet writers, of course, "knows" that there was no radio communication in the Red Army, "history gave us little time", and commands in the army were transmitted by flags, signal fires, tom-toms, at best - by wired telephone. Alas, the documents and facts do not confirm the bold hypothesis that Stalin organized the production of aircraft, tanks, guns, armored vehicles, tractors, mortars (and in cyclopean quantities), but he forgot about radio communications. As of January 1, 1941, there were (121, pp. 622-623) in the Armed Forces of the USSR: - *front-line radio stations (RAT) - 40 units (an average of **8 for each of the five future fronts**); - army and corps (RAF, RSB) - 1613 pieces (an average of **18 for each rifle and mechanized corps**); - regimental (5AK) - 5909 pieces (an average of **4 for each regiment**).*

Total - 7566 radio stations of all types. Of course, this number did not include tank and aircraft radio stations. And that's all - on January 1, 1941. Soviet radio factories continued their "peaceful creative work", and by June 22 there should have been even more radio communications. At least the 1941 plan provided for the release of 33 RAT, 940 RSB and RAF, 1000 5AK. In the memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR cited above, unfortunately, there is no data on the presence of the predecessor of the RAF - a powerful (500 W) radio station 11-AK, although there were a lot of these complexes in the troops. So, in the Kiev OVO as of May 10, 1941, there were 5 RAT complexes, 6 RAF, 97 RSB and 126 units of 11-AK. And another 1012 regimental 5AK (121, p. 191).

Now it's worth explaining what all these capital letters mean. The RSB radio station was standardly installed on the chassis of a car, had a radiated power of up to 50 W and provided a telephone communication range of 300 km, that is, in fact, in the army or even the front line of action. The RAF is a much more powerful (400-500 W) set of equipment installed on two ZIS-5 trucks. The RAT front-line radio communication complex could be considered a true miracle of technology in the 1940s. The huge power (1.2 kW) made it possible to provide telephone communication at a distance of 600 km, and telegraph - up to 2000 km. The transmitter circuit provided the ability to work on 381 fixed communication channels with automatic frequency control. So our assumption that only because of the extreme slovenliness in the car of the commander of one of the five border districts there might not have been a powerful radio station and one of the 247 available BODO encrypted communication devices is quite justified ... Let us return, however, together with the general

Popov to Leningrad: "... On Nevsky Prospekt, along which we were driving to the headquarters of the district, the usual revival reigned in these Sunday hours. There was no official announcement of the outbreak of war yet... At the headquarters of the district was General of the Army Meretskov, who **arrived in the morning** (underlined by me. - M.S.) as a representative of the people's commissar... Arriving at the headquarters, I immediately went to the office of the chief of staff of the district, General D. And Nikishev, where I found K. A. Meretskov talking to someone on the phone...

in order to understand in detail the situation on the Finnish border ... ” (194, pp. 41-42) According to what

*is written, Popov saw Meretskov at the headquarters of the district (front) **on the morning of June 22**, no later than 12 o'clock in the afternoon (“announcements of the outbreak of war - that is, Molotov's speech on the radio has not yet taken place”). And he didn't just “see”, but talked with Meretskov, discussed plans for priority measures with him ... But K.A. Meretskov for some reason categorically does not remembers:*

“... On the afternoon of June 22, I turned on the radio and heard the speech of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, V. M. Molotov, about the villainous attack of fascist Germany on our country. Now my companions, General P.P. Vechny and the officer for assignments, Lieutenant S.A. Panov, have received an answer to the question why we are going to Leningrad.

Arriving in Leningrad, I immediately went to the headquarters of the district. I was greeted with joy, everyone wanted to hear the living word of the representative of Moscow, to receive an oral order. Major General D.N. Nikishev and Corps Commissar N.N. Klementiev were on the spot ... Commander of the district troops M.M. At the beginning of the war, Popov was inspecting some of the formations of the district ... The headquarters of the district worked with maximum load. The night was restless. I was informed that on June 23, the commander of the troops of the district, M.M., would arrive in Leningrad from Murmansk. Popov... The morning of the second day of the war came. I received an urgent call to Moscow” (93, pp. 211–

214). So, from Meretskov's memoirs it follows that he arrived in Leningrad after Molotov's speech on the radio, that is, after 12 noon. He did not meet the commander of the district either in the afternoon or in the evening, or in general during the entire short time of his stay in Leningrad. And what is already quite strange - Klementyev (the PMC of the district, who was returning from Murmansk, according to Popov, in the same carriage with him), according to Meretskov, was already in Leningrad on the afternoon of June 22. What was it? Lieutenant General Popov fell behind the train?

We will return to the mysterious and tragic story of Meretskov's trip to Leningrad. In the meantime, let us note the only thing that can be said with good reason: to tell the truth about the last

pre-war days M.M. Popov and K.A. Meretskov refused. Or (which is even more likely) they were denied this right by "litconsultants".

On June 17, 1941, the most important events took place on the other side of the future front. On this day, general mobilization began in Finland. The adoption of such a decision was preceded by remarkable events that sufficiently characterize the degree of mutual distrust of the future allies (Finland and Germany).

As you know, the Nazi leadership developed (and very successfully implemented) a complex, multi-level disinformation scheme that was supposed to cover up the strategic deployment of the Wehrmacht for the war with the Soviet Union. One of the elements of this disinformation campaign was the spread of rumors about allegedly ongoing (or being prepared) negotiations between the top leadership of Germany and the USSR, during which the German side in an ultimatum form would demand big concessions from the USSR, up to the "lease of Ukraine". These rumors, spread through diplomatic and intelligence channels, were supposed, on the one hand, to "explain" the concentration of German troops near the borders with the USSR as an element of psychological pressure on Moscow, on the other hand, to dull the vigilance of the Soviet leadership, which was asked to expect an ultimatum (which reality never came out.) The confusion of minds was intensified by the famous TASS Statement of June 13, 1941, which, in particular, stated: *"Germany did not present any claims to the USSR and does not propose any new, closer agreement, which is why negotiations on this subject could not have places."* In the situation created by the joint efforts of the German, Soviet and British secret services, when no one believed anything, the TASS statement was perceived in many government offices as a hidden invitation to Berlin to negotiate.

The Finnish leadership was also included in the list of misinformed subjects. Mannerheim writes in his memoirs:

"In mid-May, the German Foreign Ministry asked what wishes Finland had in order to take them into account in the process of negotiations that are being conducted with the Soviet government and which, as expected, should

lead to a peaceful defusing of the existing tension... However, a little time passed, and we were forced to state that the information about the negotiations was taken from the ceiling and that the whole story was pure bluff" (22, p. 370).

At the beginning of June 1941, fears intensified in Helsinki that Germany and the USSR would nevertheless come to an agreement among themselves: behind Finland's back, and perhaps at Finland's expense. It seemed quite probable that Hitler - within the framework of a new big agreement with Stalin - would provide the latter with "carte blanche" to occupy Finland, or two dictators would agree on an "amicable" division of Finland (similar to how in real history in the autumn of 1939 they partitioned Poland). In such an extremely uncertain environment, the Finnish leadership did not want to start a full-scale mobilization (which the Soviet leadership could rightly consider as a hostile act) before receiving specific clarifications from the Germans on the situation.

The exact text of the Finnish request (transmitted to Berlin via Buschenhagen) is unknown. In general terms, the versions of various historians boil down to the fact that Finland wanted either an accurate message that a war between Germany and the USSR was imminent, or a guarantee that during political negotiations Moscow and Berlin would not conclude a new deal at the expense of Finland's interests. The answer was received on June 15 in the form of a telegram from Keitel to Colonel Buschenhagen, in which the latter was instructed to inform the Finns that *"the requirements and conditions put forward by Finland regarding the adoption of appropriate measures can be considered feasible"* (65, p. 167). It is unlikely that this ornate and rather vague phrase can be considered an "agreement on the attack on the Soviet Union." And yet, even Professor M. Jokipii (whose selective citation of fundamental work parasitizes our domestic "denunciators of the Finnish military") was forced to admit that *"along with oral agreements, this was the only document that President Ryti could refer to when the deputation from four parties on June 21, 1941, tried to find out from him what the guarantees of German assistance were"* (26). How "active" was the Finnish

defense planned? Mannerheim claims that the operational plans of the Finnish army

were originally purely defensive: "We

had only one war plan, and it was defensive. The grouping of troops, according to this plan, was created exclusively for the performance of defensive tasks. The assertion that Finland was supposedly preparing to conduct offensive operations is not true. The fact that we made our first offensive attempt in the area north of Lake Ladoga three weeks after the start of the war, and moved on to the next offensive actions in order to liberate Vyborg and the Karelian Isthmus three weeks later, just indicates that we needed to regroup troops for the offensive" (22, p. 374). At the same time, the 3rd Army Corps of the Finnish Army (6th Infantry Division in the Kusamo

area and 3rd Infantry Division north of Suomussalmi), under the command of the hero of the "winter war" General Siilasvuo, was already transferred to the operational subordination of the army headquarters on June 15 "Norway", which indicates a clear readiness to take part in the German attack on Kandalaksha. The order for the army "Norway", signed on June 22, 1941, demanded that the offensive of the 36th German and 3rd Finnish corps begin on July 1, 1941 (65, p. 171). Today it is already known that even at the stage of the June meetings of the Finnish and German generals, a decision was made to divide the areas of responsibility approximately along the 65th parallel, passing through Oulu and Suomussalmi. To the north of this line, all troops were subordinate to the headquarters of the German

army "Norway", to the south - to the Finnish commander in chief. The operational plan of the Finnish army "Karelia" (five infantry divisions, two chasseurs and one cavalry brigades), which actually launched an offensive along the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga on July 10, was signed (and brought to the attention of the German command) on June 28, 1941, i. e. **already after the Soviet bombardments** on June 25-26 and after the formal entry of Finland into the war (65, p. 235). On the other hand, it is easy to guess that the work on the plan of a large-scale offensive did not begin 3

days before it was signed... In the presentation of M. Jokipiia, the events unfolded as follows: "... The initial defensive plans of Finland, tied

Saimaa lakes, began in June 1941 to gradually acquire an offensive character. This can be seen from the redeployment of some units north of Lake Ladoga. With the beginning of mobilization, the General Staff issued a series of orders on June 18, in which, along with the tasks of defense, set out briefly and in passing, broad and precise offensive goals (the so-called alternative plans) were set ... From the Salpa defensive line to the reserve of forces advancing on Sortavala and Hiitola, the 5th, 15th and 19th divisions were transferred ... " All this does not

sound too convincing. It is not clear why the "precise offensive goals" are presented in the form of some kind of "alternative plans". M.Jokipia's version does not contain a clear answer to the question of who and when should choose one of several "alternatives"? The defense of

Finland's maritime borders was also planned to be no less active. Since naval topics are beyond the competence of the author of this book, we restrict ourselves to a detailed citation of the work of a specialist:

"The naval forces of Finland were entrusted with two main tasks - ensuring their navigation in the northern part of the Baltic Sea, as well as conducting active operations on the messages of the Soviet fleet in the Gulf of Finland and in the region of the Aland Islands. The Finnish

command intended to achieve the first task by introducing convoys, capturing the Aland Islands and the Soviet Hanko naval base, creating mine and artillery positions in the area of the Aland Islands and on the approaches to the skerry communications of the Gulf of Finland, organizing patrols and minesweeping in these areas. All this was to exclude the penetration of our ships, especially submarines, into the Gulf of Bothnia. The

second task was planned to be accomplished by destroying ships and vessels with submarines and boats, as well as by laying active minefields. The Finnish command planned to put 79 active and defensive minefields with a total number of 1898 mines, which was about 80% of their total stock. Of this number, in the first two days after the start of hostilities, it was planned to put up in the Finnish

*in the Gulf and in the area of the Aland Islands 38 barriers - a total of 1002 mines, on the third day - four barriers, 170 mines, and the rest - by special order. **Mine weapons were supposed to be used mainly for defensive purposes to create mine and artillery positions** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). To cover the coast, it was planned to place minefields with a high density, and within the radius of the most effective fire of their coastal artillery, with a small one" (106, p. 33).*

The areas of responsibility of the navies were divided along the 26th meridian (about 70 km east of the Helsinki-Tallinn line), namely: the Finnish fleet operates to the east of the meridian, and the German fleet to the west. From

this decision, in particular, it follows that a powerful strip of minefields at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, which tightly closed the exit of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet to the Baltic, was very beneficial for the Germans - they got rid of the threat of the appearance of an enemy fleet near German cities and cities of the Baltic Sea. This left the Finns face to face with the huge Soviet fleet (on board only two battleships - the Marat and the October Revolution - there were 24 long-range 305-mm guns). And only the absolute helplessness of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet command saved the southern coast of Finland from being destroyed by the fire of naval guns in the future ...

In order to mine the exits from the Gulf of Finland, the Germans, in the period from June 12 to 19, transferred a detachment of light ships to the skerries of the Finnish coast in the areas of Turku and Porkkala-Udd. It consisted

of: - 6 minelayers; - 18

torpedo boats; - 12 minesweepers (this term means the smallest of the three classes of minesweepers), as well as 4 tugs and several auxiliary vessels.

In addition to torpedo boats and one minelayer (Brummer, which was listed as part of the Norwegian Navy under the name Albatross before being captured by the Germans), all ships were converted ships of the cargo and passenger fleet. With such forces, the Germans began (and successfully completed for them) an operation to block the Baltic Fleet (already transferred from June 19

to the operational readiness regime No. 2), and literally in the area of its main base (Tallinn). "On June 16-19, 1941,

*a detachment of ships of the German fleet, intended for operations from Finnish naval bases, arrived in Helsinki and Turku. The commanders of the German and Finnish forces **acted independently and were not subordinate to each other** (emphasis mine. - M.S.). Interaction to achieve a single operational goal was ensured by their agreement among themselves. Based on the agreed decisions of their commanders, the headquarters developed the relevant operational documents. They were exchanged only on issues related to security (borders of mined areas, identification signals, navigation marks, etc.).*

swimming

Minelayers received an order for final preparation for hostilities on June 19, and on June 21 a prearranged signal came to conduct an active minefield operation. The laying of mines began at 23:30 on 21 June. A group of minelayers "Nord" (three minelayers), guarded by 6 boat minesweepers and

4 torpedo boats, set up barriers between Bengtscher Island and Cape Tahkuna (Khiuma Island) in several stages. Following this, in the conditions of a bright white night, the German ships passed only 3.5 km from the coast of Khium Island to the northeast to continue minelaying. At 02:21 they were attacked by machine-gun fire from two Soviet aircraft. The German ships opened fire to no avail, but one flying boat continued to pursue the formation ... At 03:00, the formation entered the Finnish skerries and stood on a new, well-camouflaged anchor

parking lot.

The mine group "Cobra" (three minelayers), guarded by 5 boat minesweepers and 6 torpedo boats, set up barriers to the north of Cape Pakrinem ... During the laying of mines, Soviet coastal observation posts several times requested German ships with light in Morse code. They did not answer, but the Kaiser lit her anchor lights. Due to the movement of Soviet ships, the barriers were set up with some deviation from the original plan, after which the German ships returned to the skerries of Finland without any interference ...

...Further, mine setting continued every night. In particular, on June 24, laying bottom mines north of the Takhkun lighthouse blocked the passage that was still free for large ships along the northern coast of Khiuma (Dago) Island ... Thus, during the first three days of the war, the enemy created a mine threat at the exits from the bases and on the main maritime communications of the KBF, having spent a total of 1060 anchor shock and about 160 bottom non-contact mines ” (106, pp. 51–54).

The lighthouses, islands and capes mentioned above, if you mark them on a geographical map, line up in several lines of minefields crossing the entrance to the Gulf of Finland in a meridional (from north to south) direction, approximately in the strip from Hanko - Hiiuma Island to Porkkala - Tallinn. The night attack by two Soviet aircraft mentioned in the logbooks of German ships is also confirmed by Soviet sources. So, Admiral V.F. Tributs (during the war years - the commander of the KBF) writes in his memoirs:

“... at 03:30, Senior Lieutenant Trunov and Lieutenant Puchkov from the 44th aviation squadron, conducting reconnaissance on MBR-2 aircraft, discovered unknown ships maneuvering in the Gulf of Finland. Having dropped to 600 meters, the planes headed for them, but were met by anti-aircraft fire. As it turned out later, these were enemy surface ships that were laying mines” (195, p. 12). The apparent difference in time is explained by the fact that

the Germans made entries in the ship's log book according to Berlin time, an hour different from Moscow.

With the laying of their own minefields at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Fleet lagged behind the enemy by about one day. Of course, he lagged behind not from an excess of peacefulness and not from the notorious "trust in the non-aggression pact signed by the Germans." The command of the fleet raised the question of the immediate start of mine laying as early as June 19, but no permission was received from Moscow. About this, almost in the same terms, they write in their memoirs and the former People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov, and the former chief of staff

of the KBF Yu.A. Panteleev: *“... I remember that the Baltics asked for this (to start mine laying. - M.S.) even earlier, when they switched to readiness No.*

i.e. June 19th. But I could not allow this - it was beyond my rights. Therefore, in the Baltic, this order was received at 06:30 on June 22 ... Then an additional order was given: "Put mines around the clock, use everything that is possible: destroyers and other ships." I remember that L. M. Galler personally called Tallinn and asked to expedite this operation: after all, several thousand mines had to be set up ... " (192) "... Some time later, I talked on HF with the Deputy People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral L.M.

Galler - Comrade Panteleev! It is necessary to take all measures for the rapid laying of minefields ... Please report this to the commander of the fleet. - Eat! I will report! - I said and could not restrain myself: - Lev Mikhailovich, how many times have we asked permission to start mine

productions! But we were refused. And now they rush from all sides, as if we ourselves

we don't understand anything...

Galler interrupted me:

"Listen, my dear, let's not go into details now. This is later, but now I earnestly ask you to report to the commander of the fleet and act faster ...

" (238) They began to act quickly and decisively. On the

same day, June 22, 1941, the command of the Baltic Fleet gave the following order to the commander of the 2nd submarine brigade:

"1. The enemy uses the Baltic Sea for his military transportation; enemy warships appeared in the southwestern waters of Finland. Information about mine laying is available only in the area of the Glotov bank. 2. Your task: Having deployed boats in the

*middle and northern parts, **sink all enemy ships by the right of unlimited submarine warfare** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) " (247). It remains only to note that the state affiliation of the "enemy ships", which were to be "sunked by the right of unlimited submarine warfare," was not indicated in this order.*

Chapter

3.2 "The Germans started the fighting ..."

"To the commanders of the 14th, 7th and 23rd Armies, commanders of the 19th

SC and 5 ° CK. At dawn on June 22, the Germans began bombing Sevastopol, Libava, and Vindava. Combat operations began [in] the Kristynopol region of the Kiev military district and the borders of the Baltic OVO. The Germans started the fighting..." (196)

With this Directive of the Military Council, the war began for the troops of the Leningrad District. It is noteworthy that a fact that is completely obvious to the modern reader ("the Germans started the hostilities") was not so ordinary for contemporaries of the events. Apparently, this is why the Armed Forces of the district considered it necessary to specifically emphasize it ... In

the first days of the war, the troops of the Leningrad District found themselves in a special position. They were separated from the Germans who started hostilities by a 400-km strip of territory that was in the zone of responsibility of the Baltic OVO. This circumstance made it possible to carry out the mobilization and operational deployment of the Northern Front in a planned, "regular" mode. At 10:45 on June 22, an order of the same content was sent to the headquarters of the armies, which the armies of the Baltic, Western, Kiev districts had not waited for before the start of the artillery cannonade on the border: "Introduce the cover plan immediately. " All plans to cover the mobilization and deployment of border districts (including the LenVO cover plan) **assumed active aviation operations in the adjacent territory.** But since on the morning of June 22 the question of the method and scale of conducting "active defense" on the Finnish border had not yet been resolved, the following phrase followed the demand to put the cover plan into effect: "Do not cross or fly over the border until special instructions" (197). Encountering no armed opposition, the troops of the district

(front) acted quite smoothly and clearly.

Operations report No. 01 of the headquarters of the 23rd Army reports that by 19:40 on June 22, the rifle corps of the army (19 SK and 5 ° SK) *"occupied the area*

cover according to plan" (198). At 22:00 on June 22, Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front was signed: "The troops of the Northern Front occupy their areas [according to] the cover plan and began mobilization according to MP-41 (mobilization plan of the 41st year. - M.S.) ... 1 td follows the railway to the station. Alakurtti, two trains arrived by 20:00... Hanko Peninsula. Parts of combat readiness. Families of military personnel are evacuated on June 22 at 18:00 by the ship "Joseph Stalin" ... Violations of the border by ground units during the day on the front of the 7th and 23rd Army were not noted "(199) .

On the same day, June 22, the main strike formations of the Northern Front also set in motion: the 1st and 10th mechanized corps. The first combat order (without a number, written by hand) was the commander of the 10th MK, Major General I.G. Lazarev gave at 8:50 on June 22: *"Raise the units and put them on alert. Be ready to go" (200). The next order of the same day (without a number and without specifying the exact time): "After the expiration of the combat readiness of the units on the night of 23.6.41. prepare for the presentation. Approximately the area of k-ha [kirch] Heinioki" (201). Strange, but this order also contained the instruction "Do not issue firearms on hand."*

But already at 23:10 on June 22, the corps commander ordered *"to equip the combat vehicles with the prescribed ammunition. Hand over to the shooters."* By the evening

of June 23, formations of the 10th MK (21st and 24th tank divisions, 198th motorized division) left the pre-war deployment points and concentrated on the southern outskirts of Leningrad. On the night of June 23-24, a huge, rumbling and fairly smoking "iron stream" of the 10th mechanized corps (as of June 1, 1941, there were 469 serviceable tanks, 86 armored vehicles, 34 tracked tractors, 1090 vehicles, 450 motorcycles in the corps) passed through Leningrad to the north, towards Vyborg (202). The divisions of the corps had the task of reaching the area of st. Kämärä, Heinioki village, Muola village, st. Tali. At the headquarters of the 1st

mechanized corps, the first combat order (b / n) was received at 10:50 on June 22:

"Komvoyskami ordered 3 TD and 163 Motor Rifle Division to raise and prepare for the performance. The performance time and route will be given additionally" (203). At 14:15 on June 22, the commander of the corps, Gener

Major M.L. Chernyavsky gave Combat Order No. 1: *"To the commanders of the 3rd TD, 163rd Motor Rifle Division, 5th MCP (motorcycle regiment). Prepare units for full combat readiness. Disperse parts in sheltered places of their camps and take all security measures. Readiness for action is constant ... "* (204) Finally, at 22:11 on June 22, the divisions of the 1st mechanized corps received an order to immediately begin a march along the route Pskov - Luga - Krasnogvardeisk (Gatchina) and by the morning of June 24 concentrate in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pulkovo). All this fully corresponded to all known pre-war plans, according to which 1 MK as the main reserve of the front command was concentrated south of Leningrad. However, a close

acquaintance with the original documents reveals something new. Thus, the Combat Order (b / n) for the advancement of the 163rd Motorized Division, signed by the commander of the 1st MK at 22:05 on June 22, is printed on the reverse side of the topographic map (205). Perhaps at the headquarters of the corps there was no blank sheet of writing paper at that time, and the time was already counting hours and minutes. For the first day of the war, which began by no means according to the plans of the Soviet command, there is nothing surprising in this. Another thing is noteworthy: at the headquarters of the mechanized corps stationed in the Pskov region, "at hand" was not a topographic map of the Pskov region, and not a map of neighboring Latvia, and not even a map of enemy Germany, but a topographic map of ... Finland. With these cards, 163 md was provided in abundance. On the reverse side of the sheets of the topographic map of southern Finland, an order was printed on passwords and recalls for June 24 (206), an order from the division commander to strengthen the reconnaissance battalion with a platoon of BT-5 tanks dated 24:00 on June

24 (207), a memorandum on the circumstances of the accident of an armored vehicle "BA-20" dated June 26 ... Violating the chronology of the presentation of events, we immediately note that 163 md never got to the front of the war with the "White Finns". On June 30, 1941, due to the catastrophic situation that developed in the North-Western Front after the Germans forced the Western Dvina (Daugava), the 1st mechanized corps was expelled from the Northern Front and transferred to a new

1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht. For a war against the Nazi invaders on their territory, pre-war plans and pre-war maps were no longer suitable. Moreover, they have become a dangerous "material evidence". Therefore, on June 29, the head of the operational department of the headquarters of the Northern Front, Major General Tikhomirov, gives the following order to the chief of staff of the 1st mechanized corps, Colonel Limarenko: *"Do not take the maps available in the corps with you. Send one car 1.5 tons to get new sets of cards"* (208).

Having received this instruction, Colonel Limarenko at 23:20 on June 29 gave the following order to his subordinates: *"Immediately send one car and one representative to the headquarters of the corps to the commanders of the 3rd TD and 163rd Motor Rifle Division to travel to the headquarters of the Northern Front to receive maps. **Previously received cards, all without exception** (emphasized by me. - M.S.), prepare for delivery and return directly to the map warehouse in Leningrad "* (209). It was not possible to pass "everything without exception". Already after the actual defeat of 163 MD on July 31, 1941, the list of operational duty officers for the management of 163 MD was again made on the back of the map of Finland ... (210)

Let us now return to June 23, 1941. The maximum length of the route of the 1st MK units on the march to Gatchina was 200-250 km. For tracked vehicles (tanks, artillery tractors), a march of such length is a big and difficult task. Difficult but doable. As mentioned above, Manstein's 56th tank corps covered 300 km from the border to Daugavpils (Dvinsk) in four days. Approximately the same length of the raid was made from the border to the Daugava and the 41st tank corps of Reinhardt. Moreover, the Germans did not just march, but (as is still commonly believed) "overcame the fierce resistance of the Red Army." Formations of the 1st MK (3rd Panzer and 163rd Motorized Divisions), without encountering the slightest opposition from the

ground or air enemy, reached the Krasnogvardeisk (Gatchina) area in two days, but with huge "losses". The collection of wheeled and tracked vehicles that lagged behind on the march continued for several more days. Judging by Operational Report No. 7 of the headquarters of the 3rd TD, even by June 28, out of 337 tanks of the division, only 255 units were in good condition in the concentration area. Of the 40 heavy three-tower tanks "T-28" lagged behind

on the march due to the "burning of friction clutches" 17 cars (211). Only by 01:00 on June 30 (Operational Report No. 11) the number of serviceable tanks increased to 278 (212). If the friction clutches of the tanks could "burn out", then **the losses of personnel during the march in the deepest rear** have no

explanation. Nevertheless, according to the documents of the headquarters of the 3rd TD, there were only 7,359 people in the division as of June 28 (commanders - 665, junior officers - 1147, privates - 5547) (213). These are very strange numbers. According to the state in the tank division there should have been 10,941 people. personnel. Already by June 1, 1941, the staffing of 1 MK with personnel was 87% (214). After June 1, units and formations of the western districts were replenished with personnel in the framework of the so-called BUS (large training camps), that is, covert mobilization. On June 23, mobilization in the Soviet Union became open and general, and the troops of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) were generally replenished with

mobilized reservists to full-time standards. There are no explanations about the fact that the number of personnel of the 3rd TD by June 28 was (still? Already?) 67% of the regular norms, in the documents of the division headquarters are not found. Some idea of how the march of the units of the 1st mechanized corps took place can be obtained from the order signed by the commander and chief of staff of the corps after June 25 (the exact date is

"The concentration of corps formations, made from Pskov to the Krasnogvardeysk region, showed that the headquarters of formations and units are not able to organize, provide, regulate the march and manage it. Commanders of units and subunits do not command columns, do not organize their combat support, technical lockdown, evacuation and restoration of lagging behind and emergency materiel. The movement of the columns is unorganized and spontaneous. Collection points for emergency vehicles are not designated. The commanding staff of the units on the march does not lead. The commanders of the cars do not control the drivers, the cars move and stop as they want. March discipline is completely absent. There are no signal flags on the cars. The columns are not controlled, the machines do not have their permanent places in the columns ... " (215)

It is hard to believe that the order is talking about the first in number and time of formation of the mechanized corps of the Red Army, created on the basis of the 13th and 20th Red Banner tank brigades, "veterans" of the first Finnish war. In terms of staffing with tanks, armored vehicles, tractors and cars, 1 MK was one of the "five" of the best mechanized corps of the Red Army. In September 1940, the corps participated in major exercises, during which the tank units of the corps made marches for 7 days, crossed the Velikaya River and then successfully broke into the operational depth of the defense of the conditional "enemy" ... However, the direction of movement was incomparably more significant,

and not his pace and organization. Further events (when, literally a few days after the concentration in the Gatchina area, units of the 1st MK moved back to Pskov and Ostrov) showed that if the pace of the march was zero, then it would be even better for the good of the cause. At the same time, in the first days of the war, the command of the Northern Front continued with the stubbornness of the wound up "music box" to execute point by point the pre-war operational plan. The breakthrough of the German tank divisions to Siauliai, Kaunas and Vilnius did not have any visible effect on the decisions and actions of the Soviet command in Leningrad. And it's hard to say whether the command of the Northern Front knew about the catastrophic development of events in the zone of the North-Western Front (Baltic Military District)? From the standpoint of today, this question sounds wild, and yet on June 24, on the third day of the war, the headquarters of the Northern Front issued Combat Order No. 5. Paragraph 3 of this

document is perceived today only as an example of "graveyard" humor: *"The experience of the first days of the war that in the fight against the Germans a huge role is played by the initiative of the command staff. Thanks to the initiative shown, it was possible to stop the advance of the German troops on the western and southwestern fronts, with the exception of one sector, where the Germans managed to advance up to 20 km due to the huge superiority in forces"*(223). We repeat once again - this is not the text of the editorial from the district

newspapers. This is the combat order of the front headquarters.

A document marked "owl. secret", which the commanders of armies, corps and divisions had to be guided in their practical actions. It is worth noting that this document appeared, probably, in the course of a certain struggle of opinions. Two eloquent corrections were made by hand (presumably by the deputy chief of staff of the front, Major General Tikhomirov). After the words "managed to stop" it is written by hand: "Almost

everywhere."

The words "with the exception of one section" have been crossed out and the words "In separate sections" have been inserted. But even with this edit, the picture of the tragic events on the western borders was distorted beyond recognition. Consoling (or deceiving) themselves and their subordinates, the command of the Northern Front **continued to work out point by point the already hopelessly outdated pre-war operational plan.**

The 163rd Motorized Division had not yet had time to concentrate in the Gatchina area, when the headquarters of the Northern Front received (at 14:30 on June 24) Combat Order No. 5: " *At 17:00 on 24.6.41. divisions to move out of the occupied area and concentrate in the area of \u200b\u200bSyami, Pedris, Rakvere. Upon arrival in the indicated area, establish surveillance of the Gulf of Finland along the northern coast of the Estonian SSR. The main task is to prevent the landing of sea and air assault forces in this area*" (216). Even earlier, on June 22 (the time is not specified in the directive), the 191st Rifle Division, which is part of the reserves of the Northern Front command, received an order "to immediately set out on a campaign *and take defense of the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland from Narva to the port of Kunda*" (217). Provided for in the pre-war Plan for covering the Leningrad District - and which became completely absurd in the real situation - the defense of the Estonian coast from the "enemy's amphibious landings" continued further. At 5 o'clock in the morning on June 26, Combat Order No. 8 of the headquarters of S.f. armored train No. 60 was sent to the

section Narva - Tallinn (218). On June 26, at 07:45, the commander of the 1st MK received Combat Order No. 8 of the headquarters of the Northern Fleet, in accordance with which the task was to "*send one T-26 tank battalion to the Estonian SSR to the Tapa station (between Rakvere and Tallinn. - M.S.)*" (219). The order was carried out and

10:40 on June 27, the 3rd tank battalion of the 25th tank regiment (163 md) was sent by rail to st. Tapa

(220). True, it should be clarified that not all of these orders to transfer parts of the Northern Front from a passive sector (the southern suburbs of Leningrad) to an even more passive one (the northern coast of Estonia) were carried out. So, already at 0:15 on June 25 to the 163rd motorized division through a communications delegate from the headquarters of S.f. Major Dobrovolsky (on a piece of paper the size of a box of cigarettes, written by hand) received a new order from the chief of staff of the front: *"Commander of the 163rd Motor Rifle Division. The front commander ordered to stop the movement. Disguise the stopping areas of the unit and ensure their turn"* (underlined in the text. - M.S.) (221). Where it was to turn, no one knew yet. On June 25, the commander of the 163rd MD gave his subordinates the following order: *"Immediately draw up orders for projects for the march to all units. Do not mark the points of the march, as they will be indicated additionally ... Load all the transported property, ammunition and weapons for the night into vehicles "* (222).

While these feverish reorganizations were taking place on the southern sector of the gigantic Northern Front, in the polar North, a thousand kilometers from Leningrad, gun salvos of a real war rumbled. True, for the time being the guns were anti-aircraft, and the war was in the air and at sea, but not on land.

Judging by the "Chronicle of the Great Patriotic War at the Northern Sea Theater" (a multi-volume documentary description of the combat operations of the fleet, compiled in 1945-1949 by the Historical Department of the People's Commissariat of the Navy), for the first time German reconnaissance aircraft were fired upon by anti-aircraft artillery of the Main Base of the Northern Fleet (Polyarny - Murmansk) at 20:50 June 18 (224). On the same day, three unknown planes flew over Kandalaksha. On June 19, at 11:32, anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on the German reconnaissance Junkers-88, which passed over the Main Base at high altitude (7500 m). 240 shells were used, alas, to no avail. On June 20 at 16:45, an unknown aircraft appeared in the sky over Severomorsk and was also fired on by anti-aircraft artillery of the Northern Fleet to no avail. It should be noted that there are no traces

the notorious "Stalin's order forbidding the shooting down of German reconnaissance aircraft" is not found in the documents and actual events. Massive fire was fired at the intruder aircraft (in total, the air defense of the Northern Fleet had 17 four-gun 76-mm anti-aircraft batteries), and if not shot down, it was by no means due to excessive peacefulness ...

On June 22 at 10:35 a.m., the Military Council of the Northern Fleet received an order from the Commissar of the Navy: *"Send submarines to the Vardø area, inclusive, up to the Vaidagubsky lighthouse, with the task of waging an unlimited war against transports and warships, preventing them from entering the Varanger Fjord"* (224). Thus, the Northern Fleet was given the task of starting hostilities in the territorial waters of German-occupied Norway. In the evening, at 18:50 on June 22, a new Directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy No. 7/27 was received, in which the tasks were

formulated even more decisively: *"1. To continue the destruction of enemy aircraft by joint strikes with the army and the destruction of transports in the Varanger*

Fjord by submarines. 2. At the slightest sign of movement, destroy vehicles in Petsamo with the fire of destroyers and batteries and joint air strikes with the army. Destroyers fire from Kutovaya. 3.

Prohibit the use of the Ainovskie Islands by the enemy field battery fire" (225).

On June 23, in Directives from Moscow, some restrictions were introduced on the actions of the fleet in Norwegian waters: *"Deputy People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral Isakov ordered the Armed Forces of the Northern Fleet not to send their aircraft further than Petsamo and Vardø, and in Porsanger Fjord and Tana Fjord he allowed to use no more than two submarine; the rest of the submarines were supposed to block the entrance to the Varanger fjord and cover the*

approaches to the Kola Bay and the Throat of the White Sea. On the same day (June 23), the ban on opening

hostilities against Finland was once again confirmed: *"The People's Commissar of the Navy gave a directive to the Military Council of the Northern Fleet, by order of the Headquarters of the High Command, until further notice against Finland, no hostilities should be carried out"* (2

Judging by the memoirs of the former Commissar of the Navy, this decision
There was a heated discussion:

"On June 22, it was relatively calm on our land border with Finland. However, German aviation already that day bombed the ships and airfields of the Northern Fleet. Late in the evening of June 22, I had a long telephone conversation with Rear Admiral A. G. Golovko, Commander of the Fleet. "Stupid position: we are bombed, and we consider Finland a non-belligerent!" - Arseniy Grigorievich got excited. "But so far only German aviation is operating against you, and besides, from Norwegian airfields," I explained ... " (192, p. 52) German aviation continued to conduct enhanced air reconnaissance in the area of the Main

Base of the Northern Fleet. *"From 04:50 to 19:30, enemy aircraft carried out single and group raids on the Northern Fleet*

Headquarters and the coast of the Motovsky and Kola bays, the Sredny and Rybachy peninsulas. At the same time, two bombs were dropped in the area of the Polyarnoye State Hospital, two in Murmansk and one in the area of the Ura Bay, some bombs were delayed. At 5:48 in the Strait of Pereima, two enemy planes dropped two bombs on our tugboat that fell behind its stern ...

Enemy aircraft were fired upon by anti-aircraft machine-gun fire and attacked by our fighter aircraft ... The commander of the Northern Fleet indicated to the unit commanders that during June 22–23 a number of ships fired at their aircraft. CKA "MO" fired on their "I-15", chasing the enemy aircraft, the destroyers "Kuibyshev" and "Uritsky" fired on their SB, despite the warning. The commander of the Northern Fleet ordered to act boldly, decisively, without nervousness. ..." (224)

The Air Force of the Northern Fleet also began active hostilities. So, on June 23, nine SB bombers from the 72nd SAP (mixed air regiment) made a sortie for reconnaissance and bombardment of the Hebukten airfield (near the Norwegian city of Kirkenes). True, they did not find the airfield due to low cloud cover. The next day, bombers of the 72nd Aviation Regiment found the Hebukten airfield: judging by the records in the Northern Fleet's railroad database, *"a fire was observed at the airfield after the bombing,"* and according to the fleet's radio intelligence , *"at 18:53 the radio station Kirkenes*

alerted her aircraft to the damage to the airfield. When returning from a mission, one SB was shot down by German fighters. It was the first loss in the sky of the Arctic. On the same day,

June 24, the first victory was also won: Senior Lieutenant B. Safonov (the future best ace of the polar sky) shot down the German Junkers-88 from the Luftwaffe bomber group in the I-16 fighter at 19:40 "KG-30". It is possible that another enemy bomber was also shot down: Lieutenant Rogozhin on the I-16 near Kildin Island attacked the Junkers, which then disappeared into the clouds. On the same day, after completing a combat mission, a Ju-88 crashed at the Hebukten airfield (tail number 2342, according to the quantitative estimate adopted by the Luftwaffe - "damaged by 65%"). Perhaps the unsuccessful landing was caused by damage to the aircraft after the battle with the Soviet fighter (224, 226).

In Operational Report No. 06 of the headquarters of the Northern Front (not to be confused with the fleet) dated 10:00 on June 25, the events of the third day of the war in the Arctic are described as follows: "In the period from 12:30 on June 24, the enemy *made a number of raids on Murmansk, Shangui, Teriverka, m. Mishukov in groups of one to five bombers. There is no loss or destruction. Our ZA (anti-aircraft artillery) and the aviation of the Northern*

Fleet shot down three aircraft ..." (248) Concluding a short review of the events of the first days of the war on the Northern Front, let us now return to the main topic - the events of the Soviet-Finnish confrontation. Strictly speaking, there were almost no "events" (if we mean by this word the active hostilities of the parties).

On the land front, they were not at all. Already in the first Directive of the Military Council of the Northern Front, there was a very specific instruction: "*Do not cross the border with Finland and do not fly over. Destroy offenders on their territory*" (227). On the other hand, starting from June 22, 1941, the word "enemy" (an integral part of almost every order, operational summary, report, etc.) either refers by default to a neighbor beyond the Soviet-Finnish border, or directly and clearly includes the Finnish army. For example, in Combat Order No. 01 of the headquarters of the 23rd Army, signed at 16:30 on June 23, 1941, we read:

"1. The enemy (Finnish and German armies) are grouped on the territory of Finland up to one infantry division in the Petrozavodsk direction and up to seven infantry divisions in the Vyborg direction; 2. The 23rd

Army has the task of defending the fortifications along the state border, the Keksgolmsky and Vyborgsky fortified areas, to firmly hold them and prevent the enemy from invading our territory " (228). An even more surprising

phrase is found in the 23rd Army Combat Log. Theoretically, this document should have been kept directly during the events described in it. In practice, and especially in the context of the catastrophic defeat of the first weeks of the war, entries in the ZhBD were often made retroactively or even by people who were not witnesses and participants in the described hostilities. So, for example, the ZhBD of the Western Front, describing the events of the first days of the war, was signed by Lieutenant General Malandin, who spent the first week of the war in Moscow and only after the defeat of the front and the arrest of the highest command personnel began to act as deputy chief of staff of the actually newly created Western Front (229) . The fate of the 23rd Army of the Northern Front was not so tragic, and in June of the 41st Army Headquarters acted in a situation that was only "close to combat." Therefore, it is rather difficult to guess when the entry dated June 23 was made, which reads: ***"By violating the peace treaty, Finland also went to war against the USSR"*** (230).

This is a very strange entry. Even without going into a discussion about which of the parties "went to war" against the other, violating the peace treaty, it can be unequivocally stated that for June 23, 1941, this phrase was far ahead of the real events. The operational reports of the headquarters of the 23rd Army, the 10th and 1st mechanized corps with monotonous constancy report that *"there were no meetings with the ground and air enemy, there were no losses."* The message that *"Ryti declared Finland at war with the Soviet Union"* flew from headquarters to headquarters in the early morning of June 27, that is, even with an actual delay of one day. The first record of real combat operations on the front of the 23rd Army (*"during the day and night 29.6*

the enemy in groups from a company to a battalion tried to penetrate the state border") appeared two days later (231).

Most likely, the mysterious entry dated June 23 was made in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army retroactively, but even in this case it clearly indicates the general mood of the command staff of the Northern Front: Finland was unconditionally considered an "enemy", the outbreak of war with which is only a matter of **time** . Of course, such "moods" arose not only (and not so much) in Leningrad, but also in Moscow. And here we must agree with Professor V.N. Baryshnikov that *"in the USSR, without alternative, Finland was classified as one of the main participants in the German coalition in the war against the Soviet Union."*

One of the few representatives of the top military-political leadership of the USSR, who in his memoirs focused on the events of the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the former People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov repeatedly

uses the following phrases: *"... Despite the peace treaty concluded with Finland in March 1940, we did not flatter ourselves with the hope that the Ryti government would be a good neighbor ... Knowing numerous facts, we had no doubt: if Finland did not enter the war against us simultaneously with Germany on June 22, then only for tactical reasons ... "*

Almost the same thoughts and sentiments were expressed in his memoirs published in 1968 by the former commander of the Northern Front (Leningrad VO) M.M. Popov: *"It was difficult to find a reason why neither the Germans nor the Finns immediately launched an offensive simultaneously with the deployment of hostilities on the western borders of our country"* (194, p. 42). It is

noteworthy that even Berlin was forced to take a not so "uncontested" position. As you know, Hitler, in his radio address at 6 am on June 22, 1941, apparently for provocative purposes, stated:

"...Cooperating with their Finnish comrades, the comrades-in-arms of the winners of Narvik hold the shores of the Arctic Ocean. German divisions under the command of the victorious Norway guard the Finnish land together with the heroes of the Finnish battles for

liberation, acting under the direction of their marshal..." (121, p. 438)

This

declaration provoked indignation in Helsinki and puzzled questions in London and Washington. As a result, Ribbentrop, at a meeting with foreign journalists, **was forced to actually disavow Hitler's statement.** In the presentation of Marshal Mannerheim himself, events developed as follows: *"Since Finland*

was not obliged to enter the war along with the Germans, and we have repeatedly emphasized this circumstance, Hitler had no right to such a unilateral statement. I cannot help thinking that such an act was intended to present Finland with a fait accompli that would force the Russians to attack, but, on the other hand, I am sure that the Russians would hardly have refused to attack Finland in any case ...

*... To clarify the position of Finland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the same day sent a circular telegram to our foreign representatives, including those working in Moscow and Berlin, indicating that Finland wishes to remain in a position of neutrality, but will defend itself if it is attacked by the Soviet Union. This statement was repeated two days later in a newsletter intended for embassies. Our statement was also taken into account in Germany, judging by the remark made at the press conference in Wilhelmstrasse, which said that **our position was not understood and that therefore Finland should henceforth be considered a neutral country. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of England, speaking in Parliament, said that England considers Finland neutral** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) and that, as far as is known, no changes have occurred in relations between Finland and the Soviet Union ... "* (22, p. 374) Be that as it may, but, having approached the last shaky line between peace and war, both sides - both Finland and the

Soviet Union - have not yet crossed it. **Opportunities to prevent armed conflict remained less and less, but they still existed.** Most importantly, there were no casualties until June 25. By a happy coincidence, no blood was shed, even in those cases where it was theoretically possible.

The first, undoubtedly, combat operation of the Finnish fleet was the landing of troops on the Åland Islands. These islands, blocking the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia (i.e., the territorial waters of Sweden and Finland), belonged to Finland, but due to numerous international treaties, they had to have the status of a demilitarized zone. To control the observance of this regime, the Soviet consulate was located on the islands. The idea of capturing the Ålands in the very first days of the war and breaking through the Red Banner Baltic Fleet into the Gulf of Bothnia has been invariably present in the operational plans of the Soviet command since at least the spring of 1939. Regardless of what Finnish intelligence knew and did not know about the plans of the Soviet leadership, the strategic importance of the Åland Islands, a "chain" blocking the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia, was obvious

to any military specialist. On the night of June 21-22, 5,000 Finnish troops were transferred from the mainland to the archipelago on 23 ships with military equipment, including, among other things, 69 guns. Despite the fact that the appearance of Finnish troops on the islands (indisputably violating international treaties) did not pose a direct threat to the Soviet Union (more precisely, it **only created additional obstacles for a possible invasion of the Soviet fleet into the territorial waters of Finland and Sweden**), the reaction was immediate. Already at 6 o'clock in the morning on June 22 (that is, at the very time when the meeting in Stalin's office had just begun in distant Moscow), KBF Air Force aircraft bombed Finnish ships and fortifications on Korpo Island (30 km west of Turku). However, as far as can be judged from the available sources, there were no losses of ships and casualties among the personnel. The staff of the Soviet consulate (31 people) was forcibly, but also without casualties, taken to the mainland on a Finnish ship and then returned to their homeland (26, p. 281)

Until June 25, the minefields installed by Finnish submarines in the Gulf of Finland did not lead to losses and casualties. **The first mine laying was carried out on the night of June 21-22.** Then they were continued on June 23 and 24 (sometimes there are reports of alleged mine laying on June 17 or even June 14 are fiction). Minefields were placed in the western part of the main shipping lanes.

fairways of the Gulf of Finland, in the area of the island of Gogland (Suursaari), lighthouses

Rodscher and Vaindlo. The work of M. Jokipia, however, contains the assertion that minefields were also placed in the "Kunda Bay" off the coast of Estonia. Kunda is a small village (5 thousand people in the early 90s) at the confluence of the river of the same name into the waters of the Gulf of Finland. Accordingly, there was a fishing pier there from ancient times (and in modern times a cement plant appeared). What and why it was to mine there, and in the very first order, is not clear. It is noteworthy that neither in the memoirs of the People's Commissar of the Navy Kuznetsov, nor in the memoirs of the former commander of the KBF (and later Doctor of Historical Sciences) Admiral Tributs, **nothing is said about Finnish minefields in Kunda Bay**. It is not surprising that many modern Russian compilers considered it necessary to "strengthen and correct" the long-suffering book of M. Jokipii in this matter and replaced "Kunda Bay" with Narva Bay or Koporskaya Bay in their fabrications. The most unscrupulous went even

further east and without any sentimentality "mined" Kronstadt ... The Red Banner Baltic Fleet began laying minefields in the area of Gogland Island **a few days later**. The first message about the appearance of minefields in the central part of the Gulf of Finland was received on the morning of June 24th. *"The minesweepers escorting the transport "Kazakhstan" discovered six floating mines eight miles southwest of the Vaindlo lighthouse ... All six mines were in the area where, according to official data received in 1944 from the Finnish command, their submarine set up a barrier and -3. Either the Finns made some typical mistakes when preparing their submarine mines, or the latter had some technical defects, but many of them either*

surfaced during setting or broke anchor a little later ... On July 4, the Ural mine layer and the destroyer "Kalinin" set up a minefield 14-A in the passage between the islands of Vaindlo and Rodsher. The patrol ship "Purga" and two boats of the Ministry of Defense were guarded ... A few minutes before the end of the mine setting, when the detachment approached the area of the the

discovered five enemy mines that surfaced ... The discovered mines shot down the boats of the Ministry of Defense, accompanying the detachment ... ” (106, pp. 60-61) The first loss was the Soviet patrol boat No. But this happened on the night of July 3, that is, a week after the official declaration of war.

Returning to the events of June 22-24, 1941, it should, of course, be recognized that it is completely denial of any possible losses on the line of contact between the two armies (for example, during the actions of military intelligence groups in the adjacent territory, and such actions - at least from the side Red Army - known) is not necessary. Nevertheless, **the possibility of choosing between a “bad peace” and a full-scale armed conflict still remained.**

Chapter

3.3 Asking a Question

Our story has come to its main point - the events of June 25, 1941. These events began the day before, on June 24, 1941, when the Directive of the Headquarters of the High Command was signed by the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal Timoshenko. This Directive was first published only in 1996. Here is its full text:

"June 24, 1941

1. It has been established from reliable sources that German troops are concentrating on the territory of Finland, with the aim of striking at Leningrad and capturing the Murmansk region and Kandalaksha. To date, up to four infantry divisions have been concentrated in the Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi area and a group of unknown strength in the areas of Kotka and north of the Hanko Peninsula.

German aviation

also systematically arrives on the territory of Finland, from where it carries out raids on our territory. According to reports, the German command intends to launch an air strike on Leningrad in the near future. This circumstance is of decisive importance.

2. In order to prevent and disrupt an air strike on Leningrad, planned by the German command in Finland, I ORDER: From June 25, 1941, the

Military Council of the Northern Front - to begin combat operations of our aviation and to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields in the area by continuous raids day and night the southern coast of Finland, meaning the points of Turku, Malmi, Porvoo, Kotka, Holola, Tampere, in the areas bordering the Karelian Isthmus and in the region of Kemijärvi, Rovaniemi (northern Finland. - M.S.). The operation is to be

carried out jointly with the Air Forces of the Northern and Baltic Fleets, about which to give appropriate instructions to the command of the fleets.

At the same time, bring the air defense of Leningrad to full combat readiness, providing reliable cover for Leningrad from German air raids by a sufficient number of fighters. Copies of the given orders to convey to me by 24:00 06/24/1941. From the Headquarters of the High

Command, People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Timoshenko" (237). On June 25 and 26, the Sovinformburo announced

the decisions made. The Sovinformburo Report for June 24, published on June 25 (i.e., on the day the massive air strikes began), said:

"Finland placed its territory at the disposal of the German troops and German aviation. For 10 days now, German troops and German aviation have been concentrated in areas adjacent to the borders of the USSR. On June 23, 6 German planes that took off from Finnish territory tried to bombard the Kronstadt area. The planes were driven away. One aircraft shot down and four German officers taken prisoner. On June 24, 4 German planes tried to bombard the Kandalaksha area, and in the Kuolajärvi area some parts of the German troops tried to cross the border. The planes have been driven off. Parts of the German troops repulsed. There are captured German soldiers." In the report of the Soviet Information Bureau for June 25 (published on June 26), the military operations of Soviet aviation against Finland were also mentioned: "

Our aviation inflicted a number of crushing blows on German airfields in Finland, and also bombarded Memel, enemy ships north of Libava and the oil town of the port of Constanta." As you can see, this event was not specifically emphasized: it was mentioned in a complex sentence, along with other bombardments, and somewhat tongue-tied (there could be German planes in Finland, there could be German air units, but not "German airfields"). The Sovinformburo did not report on the severance of diplomatic relations, the recall of ambassadors, the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty, and finally, the declaration of war by the Soviet Union on Finland - and this was the purest truth.

The Soviet Union did not break, did not withdraw, did not terminate and did not announce - neither before the start of air raids, nor after them.

In this sense, the situation was strikingly different from how the "winter war" was launched at the end of November 1939. It is worth noting that fascist Germany also started the war against the USSR in a different way: an hour after the first cannon salvos on the border, the German ambassador in Moscow handed Molotov an official statement from the German government, and at 6 o'clock in the morning (Berlin time) with a radio message about the start of the war Hitler

himself spoke with the Soviet Union. Finland declared that it was at war with the Soviet Union the next day, June 26, 1941. And the Soviet Information Bureau did not report anything about this! Not June 26, not any day after. What is even more strange, since, for example, the Sovinformburo reported in good faith on the declaration of war by Hungary on June

28. The two reports of the Sovinformburo mentioned above (for June 24 and 25) are limited to the "array of information" that was reported to the Soviet people about the circumstances of the beginning of

the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War. These events were described in much more detail years, in memoirs and historical literature.

Here are some typical texts. Memoirs of the former commander of the Northern Front M.M. Popov (the book was published in 1968, but M.M. Popov's articles were written in March 1964):

"In response to the attempts of Finnish aviation on June 23 and 24 to bombard Leningrad, Kronstadt and the cities of the K-F SSR (hereinafter, highlighted me. - M.S.) People's Commissar ordered to prepare and on June 25 to carry out a simultaneous attack on the airfields based on the German and Finnish aviation in Finland ... About 20 airfields were subjected to powerful strikes, during which it was destroyed or many enemy planes were damaged ... "

Order of Lenin Leningrad Military District. Historical essay" ("Lenizdat", 1968).

"On June 23 and 24, German aircraft based in Finland tried to carry out raids on Leningrad, Kronstadt and cities in Karelia. To warn them

***further attacks**, Soviet aviation at dawn on June 25 delivered powerful blows to 18 enemy airfields and destroyed 30 enemy aircraft on the ground. In addition, 11 aircraft were shot down in air battles. Attacks on enemy airfields continued in the following days ...* "Memoirs of the Chief Air Marshal

(before the war - Air Force Commander of the Leningrad District)
A.A. Novikov "In the sky of Leningrad" ("Science", 1970):

*"For the first three days, we fought only with single and small groups of enemy aircraft, trying to probe the air approaches to the city ... Soviet pilots **did not allow the bombing of Leningrad, Kronstadt, Vyborg and the cities of Karelia in June**. But, paying tribute to our pilots, we understood that the enemy's failure was largely due to the low activity of his aviation, the main strike forces of which had not yet entered into action **here** ... the first hours of the war. Such measures could be our active actions in the air.*

Early in the morning of June 25, I was at the communication center located in the basement of the district headquarters building. Final preparations, clarification of data, short negotiations with the commanders of air formations, and engines roared at the airfields. The air armada of 263 bombers and 224 fighters and attack aircraft rushed to the 18 most important enemy airfields.

*The raid lasted several hours. One group followed another. Some objects were subjected to 3-4 hits. As a result of the first day, **the enemy lost 41 combat vehicles**. Success was evident, and the operation continued. For six days, 39 enemy airfields were hit. In air battles and on the ground, **the enemy lost 130 aircraft** and was forced **to withdraw his aircraft to distant rear bases** - beyond the range of our fighters. This redeployment, of course, limited the maneuver of enemy bombers ... This multi-day operation, the first in the history of Soviet aviation, convinced us that massive attacks on*

deep airfields - a reliable means of combating enemy aircraft ... " Major General of Aviation,

Professor M.N. Kozhevnikov, "The Command and Headquarters of the Air Force of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War" (M., "Nauka", 1977): "*In certain areas, where the situation was favorable,*

*Soviet pilots, conducting active air battles, simultaneously delivered powerful blows to enemy airfields. Such a situation developed in the first days of the war on the northern sector of the Soviet-German front, where the Nazi troops went on the offensive only on June 29, 1941 . strikes on the airfields of Finland and Northern Norway, where the air units of **the 5th German air fleet and Finnish aviation were based.** The Air Force Command of the Northern Front developed and on June 24 approved by the Military Council of the Northern Front a plan for the destruction of enemy aircraft at airfields in the northwestern direction. A total of 540*

aircraft.

*Early on the morning of June 25, 236 bombers and 224 fighters launched the first massive attack on 19 airfields. The enemy, not expecting such a strike, was actually taken by surprise and failed to organize countermeasures. As a result, Soviet pilots successfully bombed aircraft stands, fuel and ammunition depots. **41 enemy planes were destroyed at the airfields. Our aviation had no losses.** In the next five days, several more effective strikes were delivered on the same airfields and those newly discovered by air reconnaissance. According to aerial photographic control, Soviet pilots, having attacked a total of 39 airfields, made about 1,000 sorties, destroyed and disabled 130 enemy aircraft. The command of the fascist German troops in Finland and Northern Norway was forced to withdraw its aviation to distant rear airfields and abandon the raid on Leningrad in the near future ... "*

You can give a few more texts, but they will all be similar to each other, like nesting dolls. The general line of presentation was set, and until the mid-1990s, it practically did not undergo noticeable changes. Let us try to formulate this "line" of official Soviet historical propaganda as precisely and concretely as possible.

1. The political component of the event (the actual beginning of a full-scale undeclared war) is completely passed over in silence. This side of what happened in the writings of Soviet historians simply does not exist. Only one of the major operations of the Soviet Air Force is being discussed. And no more. 2. The main (or even the only!) Object on which the strike was made, airfields based "enemy aircraft" are declared

3. The result of the operation is beyond praise. "Success was evident", the enemy suffered huge losses (130 aircraft - two-thirds of all Finnish aviation), the few surviving enemy air units were forced to retreat "to distant rear airfields". Our aviation "had no losses" (according to Kozhevnikov) or, perhaps, had some losses, but not worthy of special mention.

4. As part of the general attitude to completely ignore the foreign policy component of the events of June 25, the fact that one of the consequences of the "operation" was Finland's entry into the war against the USSR is not mentioned at all. Here is a brief summary of what for half a century Soviet historians and memoirists were united.

Noticeable differences, however, are found in the assessment of **the actual and / or potential actions of the enemy**, and also - which is not at all typical for Soviet historiography - in the formulation of goals and objectives, for the solution of which such a successful operation was carried out in general. At these points there is **a wide range of opinions**. The message of

the Soviet Information Bureau (*"On June 23, 6 German planes that took off from Finnish territory tried to bombard the Kronstadt area. The planes were driven away. One plane was shot down and four German officers were taken prisoner"*) is extremely specific

(the place, time, number of aircraft are indicated) and - as will be shown later - has a great resemblance to reality. The former

commander of the Northern Front, in his memoirs, speaks of "attempts **by Finnish aviation**" to bomb "Leningrad, Kronstadt and the cities of Karelia." Apparently, the "attempts" were very, very timid, since 13 pages before the phrase cited above, M.M. Popov writes that *"Leningrad and other objects on the territory of the district were not bombarded"* (194, p. 32).

The official (1968 model) history of the Leningrad Military District already speaks of "**German planes**", which, it turns out, *"tried to make raids."* Like this? They took off, flew, and halfway changed their minds and returned? If the planes crossed the state border and at least approached Leningrad or some unnamed "cities of Karelia", then the raid had already taken place. It could be successful (for attackers) or not, but in any case it took place

"raid", not "attempted raid".

Marshal Novikov almost "directly" reports that there were no raids "on Leningrad and the cities of Karelia" at all (*"we fought only with single and small groups of enemy aircraft trying to probe the air approaches to the city"*). It is extremely important to note that Novikov does not mention a single word about **German** air units allegedly based on Finnish airfields. Professor Kozhevnikov does not mention any raids on Leningrad at all, limiting himself only to

the general wording: "A favorable situation has developed ... "measures" could "save Leningrad from the fate of cities subjected to fierce bombardment." Kozhevnikov, without further

ado, returns to the original wording of the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (*"in order to disrupt the impending raid on Leningrad"*). Another difference between Kozhevnikov's monograph and other descriptions of June 25, 1941, hardly noticeable to the "broad readership", but understandable to specialists, is:

- the emergence of a specific name for the German aviation unit ("5th Air Fleet");
- the emergence of the union "I" (*"massive strikes on the airfields of Finland **and** Northern Norway ... air units of the 5th German Air Fleet **AND** Finnish aviation ..."*).

Until the end of the Soviet era, Kozhevnikov's monograph, in fact, determined the maximum permissible level of disclosure of the topic on June 25, 1941, which was possible for "party historians" who wanted to preserve the remnants of self-respect and scientific conscientiousness.

In order to bring the discussion to the level of a constructive discussion, it is necessary, in our opinion, to start from the most important thing. The most important thing is **the most accurate definition of the essence of the issues under discussion**. Only a clear formulation of questions will make it possible to take a step towards obtaining equally clear and specific answers.

Considering the deep and long-term "contamination" of the problem with ideological "garbage", it will be necessary to just as directly and clearly define the range of issues that will NOT be discussed. So:

1. **The question of the attitude of Finland** (government, military command, parties, parliament, people) **to the Soviet Union will not be discussed**. Why? Because it's a very simple question. No need to guess - and no need to rummage through archival dust for years - in order to find a pre-known answer. Finland hated Stalin and the Stalinist empire. Nothing else could have been expected after the aggression of 1939, after the death of tens of thousands of people in the icy hell of the "winter war", after a hundred thousand high-explosive and incendiary bombs that fell on undefended Finnish cities, after the expulsion of 400 thousand people from their homes. Masochism as a severe mental disorder occurs in individual unfortunate people, but cases of mass, "nationwide" masochistic insanity are not known in history. In any case, Finland did not suffer from this disease. 2. **Formal legal questions** (was Finland on the morning of June 25, 1941 a neutral country? Can it be considered

cooperation with Nazi Germany as a military alliance?) **will not be discussed either.** Why? For two reasons.

Firstly, because no one is able to grasp the immensity and the discussion of legal problems is beyond the scope of this study. The author of this book does not consider himself competent enough to discuss such complex issues. Moreover, there are hardly two specialists in international law who can come to a common assessment of that situation. At least in the foreign policy departments of the United States and Great Britain, they did not come to a consensus. The United States refused to declare war on Finland, as a result, a diplomatic mission of the main military ally of the USSR worked in the capital of Finland, which was fighting against the USSR. Britain - under the strongest pressure from Stalin - agreed to recognize Finland as an ally of Germany and declare war on her. But this also happened only on December 6, 1941, that is, after the main events of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War had already ended. Of course, difficult questions

can be made very simple if they are considered in the well-known "pickpocket logic", according to which everything began and ended with the fact that in a crowded bus he was grabbed by the hands and beaten in the face. Naturally, the pickpocket does not like to remember where his hands were BEFORE that and how many other people's wallets they pulled out of other people's pockets... Hanko). This circumstance was greatly exacerbated by the fact of virtually uncontrolled transit of military equipment and military units along the Finnish railways from Vyborg to Hanko. Finally, the very concept of "neutrality" is apparently applicable only to states that have sovereignty. It raises certain doubts about the applicability of the term "sovereignty" to a country whose government silently listens (and

even accepts for execution!) The neighbor's instructions on the candidacies of a new president or enters into negotiations on the forced transfer of its natural resources (Petsamo nickel) to a concession to the same mighty and unceremonious neighbor...

Secondly, the discussion of legal casuistry does not bring us any closer to answering the questions that are in the title of this book and are its main theme. **It is not at all about whether the Soviet Union had formal grounds for bombing Finland or not.** This book was written in order to sort out another question: **did the decision made on June 24 and implemented on June 25 contribute to the security of the USSR in general and its second capital in particular?**

With regard to the specific historical conditions of June 1941, this question is transformed into another: **did these actions contribute to the successful conduct of the war against the main enemy - Nazi Germany?** At a primitive everyday level, this simple logic can be illustrated by the following example:

the law does not prohibit (and therefore every citizen has the right) to go into the forest and go to bed naked in the snow in winter. But the vast majority of normal sober people are in no hurry to exercise this right. Why? Because it is harmful to health (in certain cases - deadly), although it is legal from a formal legal point of view. Now let's move from caricature metaphors to direct ones.

historical analogies.

Bulgaria was an ally of Nazi Germany. This is a fact confirmed by the official accession of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact, the entry of the German army into its territory and the actual participation of the Bulgarian army in joint military operations with the Wehrmacht on the territory of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union did not start military operations against Bulgaria in the summer of 1941. Although the capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet and its aviation are quite

allowed.

Japan was the most important ally of Nazi Germany. It was these countries that created the notorious Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Moreover, for a number of years Japan pursued a policy that was extremely hostile towards the USSR. So "hostile" that our countries twice stood on the verge of a full-scale war with each other. Nevertheless, neither in June nor in July of the 41st did the Soviet Union declare war on Japan,

did not start undeclared hostilities on earth, in heaven and at sea. On the contrary, considerable efforts were made to prevent the war in the Far East from starting. **Italy** was the

oldest ally of Nazi Germany. Moreover, Italy **officially declared war** on the Soviet Union. This was done at 12 noon on June 22, 1941. The Italians would have declared war earlier, but before noon to find the Soviet ambassador in Rome, comrade. Gorelkin failed (he was basking on the beach that Sunday morning).

And from Venice to Lviv is only 1000 km in a straight line. Theoretically, Soviet long-range bombers ("DB-3f", "Er-2", "TB-7") had a flight range of three or more thousand kilometers. Speaking abstractly, the entire industrialized north of Italy (Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence) was within the reach of Soviet bomber aircraft. But the crazy idea to start military operations in the summer of 1941 against Italy, which had declared war on the Soviet Union, was not even discussed, and even more so, it was not put into practice. Although from a formal legal point of view, such a crazy step would be completely flawless ...

Having finished listing what will not be discussed in this book, we now formulate **seven basic questions**:

1. What forces (units, formations, aircraft) of German and Finnish bomber aviation were based on Finnish airfields? 2. What kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group carry out during June 22–24, 1941? What actions were planned by the enemy command for the coming days and weeks?

3. What was the real scale of the threat posed by the enemy aviation grouping in Finland, compared both with other threats hanging over Leningrad and with the air defense capabilities of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet?

4. What did the Soviet command, Soviet intelligence know about the deployment of enemy air units in Finland, about his actions and plans?

5. What was the real reason for the decision on June 24, 1941 to launch an air strike on Finland, what were the real goals and objectives of this operation?

6. What was the immediate result of the Soviet airstrike?

Air Force in Finland (losses of the parties, changes in the plans of the parties)?

7. How did the June 25 air strike affect the general course of the Soviet Union's war against Germany and its allies?

Questions ## 1, 2, 3 and 6 are quite simple. And the fact of half a century of absence in Russian historiography of intelligible and universally recognized answers to such simple questions is a shame. Question No. 7 is much more difficult, an unambiguous answer is unlikely to be found, but a discussion on this problem is possible and desirable. As for questions Nos. 4 and 5, they cannot be resolved within the current source base, but at least an attempt to discuss them also has the right to exist.

Chapter 3.4

Composition and deployment of the air forces of the parties

We will not reveal a terrible military secret if we recall that combat aircraft do not fly in flocks, like free birds, but conduct combat operations as part of the appropriate subunits, units and formations. Units and formations have their own numbers, headquarters and battle colors. As well as quite specific places of deployment (basing). All this lends itself to concrete accounting and description, which description - in relation to German and Finnish aviation - has long been made by the efforts of two generations of professional historians. All that is required of us is conscientious work at the level of a modest student essay. Before offering the reader an ultra-short "abstract" compiled on the basis of (26, 52, 53, 65, 88, 145, 226, 239, 240, 241, 243, 311), let's define the terms and definitions used. This is all the more necessary, given that the German, Finnish and Soviet Air Forces had a different structure and number of basic tactical units (military leaders, alas, did not take care of the convenience of future historians).

Let's start with German aviation, since it was precisely its presence on Finnish territory that became, as is commonly believed, the main cause of the events of June 25, 1941. The main tactical unit of the Luftwaffe was the

aviation group. The Luftwaffe air group included three **squadrons** ("staffels") of 12 crews each. The squadron, in turn, was divided into three **units** of 4 crews each. In total, the Luftwaffe air group, fully staffed according to the staffing table, should have (including the headquarters link) 40 crews. Several groups (usually three) were part of a tactical formation, which in Russian-language literature is usually called **a squadron** ("geschwader" in German). Several squadrons of the Luftwaffe were reduced to **an aviation corps**. The highest organizational structure of the Luftwaffe was **the Air Fleet**, which, as a rule, included two air corps, that is, from 5 to 12 squadrons, in total about 500-1000 crews.

Squadrons were designated as follows: JG (fighter), KG (bomber), StG (assault). Squadrons armed with Me-110 multi-purpose twin-engine fighter-bombers were designated as ZG ("destroyers") or SKG ("high-speed bombers"). The Luftwaffe air group was designated as an integral part of the corresponding squadron. For example, II / KG-53 is the second group of the 53rd bomber squadron. There was no special naval aviation (similar to the Soviet Navy Air Force or US Naval

Aviation) in the German Armed Forces. For joint operations with the fleet, special formations were created within the framework of the general structure of the Luftwaffe. For example, on the Baltic theater of operations directly related to the topic of our book, a connection called

"Fliegerführer Ostsee" (which can be translated as "Baltic Air Command"). It included the bomber group KGr-806, a group of seaplanes ("Aufkl.Gr-125"), a squadron of tactical reconnaissance.

The main tactical unit of Soviet aviation was an aviation **regiment**. Before the war, according to the current staffing table, the Soviet air regiment consisted of five **squadrons** of 12 crews each and a command level, a total of 62-64 crews (i.e., the Soviet regiment was one and a half times more than the Luftwaffe air group in terms of the number of crews).

Fighter (IAP), bomber (BAP), assault (SHAP) and reconnaissance (RAP) air regiments were formed in the Soviet Air Force. Each regiment had its own "personal" number (for example, 123 IAP, 40 BAP). Sometimes the name of the bomber regiments indicated their functional purpose: high-speed bomber (SBAP), long-range bomber (DBAP), heavy bomber (TBAP). Several regiments (from 3 to 5) were combined into **an air division**: fighter (IAD), bomber (BAD), mixed (SAD). Assault air regiments at the beginning of the war were part of the SADs. Reconnaissance aviation regiments, as a rule, were not part of air divisions, reporting directly to the command of the fronts (1–2 RAPs as part of the district / front aviation).

The navy of the USSR had its own aviation, separate from the ground forces. At the level of divisions and units (link, squadron, regiment), the structure of the Navy Air Force did not differ from the structure of front-line aviation. But there were no divisions in the Navy Air Force, and a formation of two (as a rule) air regiments was called **a brigade**. Another difference between the Navy Air Force was the existence of the so-called "mine and torpedo" regiments (MTAP) in its composition. These regiments were armed with long-range bombers "DB-3" / "DB-3f", specially equipped to drop sea depth mines and aircraft torpedoes. The extremely small (in comparison with the gigantic aviation of the eastern neighbor)

Finnish Air Force also had a very bizarre structure, when two units of the same type could have from 3 to 33 aircraft. Additional confusion is created by the fact that the tactical unit, roughly corresponding to the German air group, was called "air squadron" in the Finnish Air Force

(Lentolaivue, abbreviated as LLv), and the unit, which included several Lentolaivue and approximately corresponded to a heavily understaffed Luftwaffe squadron, was called the "air regiment" (Lentorykmentti).

In order to simplify the further presentation of events, we **will violate the correctness of the literal translation**, and the main tactical unit of the Finnish Air Force (LLv) will hereinafter be called **the "group"**, and the units that make up it will be called **"squadrons"**. The group was supposed to include three squadrons of 12 crews each. The fighter and bomber groups of the Finnish aviation did not differ in any way in names, which, however, will not create big problems for the reader, since all three bomber groups ("LLv-42", "LLv-44", "LLv 46") did not participate in military operations in June 1941 were not accepted.

Having done with the discussion of terminology, we now turn to accounting the strength and deployment of the aviation forces of the parties.

The situation in which the Luftwaffe command found itself on the Eastern Front might at first glance seem hopeless. There were very few forces. Small compared to the number of enemy aircraft (i.e., the Soviet Air Force), small compared to any

theoretical standards, little compared to the experience of previous campaigns.

In May 1940, the Germans managed to concentrate on the Western Front the largest grouping of Luftwaffe forces in the entire period of the Second World War. The offensive of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France, on a front of 300 km in a straight line (from Arnhem to Saarbrücken), was supported from the air by two Air Fleets (2nd and 3rd), which included 27 fighter and 40 bomber air groups, 9 groups of dive bombers "Ju-87" and 9 groups of multi-purpose twin-engine "Me-110". A total of **85 groups, 3641 combat aircraft** (and this is without taking into account the outdated Arado biplanes "Ar-68" and "Henschel" "Hs-123", excluding reconnaissance transport, air ambulance). Operational density - **12 aircraft per kilometer** of the offensive front.

On June 22, 1941, 22 fighter and 29 bomber air groups, 8 groups of Ju-87 dive bombers and 4 groups of multi-purpose twin-engine Me-110 were concentrated on the Eastern Front (including Luftwaffe units stationed in northern Norway and Romania). A total of **63 groups, 2344 combat aircraft** (including defective ones). After the previous many months of fighting in the Balkans and over the Mediterranean Sea, the technical condition of the Luftwaffe fleet was depressing. The average percentage of combat-ready aircraft was about 77%. Air groups like

II/JGy77, III/JGy27, I/StGy2, II/KGy53, III/KGy3, I/ZGy26, arrived on the Eastern Front with less than half of the regular number of serviceable aircraft in service. The

minimum length of the offensive front, even on the very first day of the war, was 800 km in a straight line (from Klaipeda to Sambir). Within two weeks, the width of the war front almost doubled (1,400 km in a straight line from Riga to Odessa). Even without taking into account the losses of the first days, the average operational density of German aviation decreased to **2 aircraft per kilometer** of the offensive front (again, including faulty ones).

It only remains to add to this that, according to the pre-war ideas of Soviet military science, a front-line offensive operation required the creation of densities of 15–20 aircraft per kilometer. Even Hitler, although he is considered to be paranoid,

understood the disproportion of forces and tasks: *"With such a huge space, the Luftwaffe is not able to simultaneously process it entirely; At the beginning of a war, aviation can only dominate parts of a gigantic front. Therefore, it should be used only in close cooperation with ground operations ... "* (120, p. 807) Now let's look at the situation from the

other side, from the side of Germany's opponents. In May 1940, the fighter forces of French aviation in the combat zone consisted of 34 squadrons, that is, about 400-450 fighters. Taking into account the fighter aviation of Holland, Belgium and the expeditionary forces of the British Air Force, the strength of the Western Allied grouping increases **to 50 squadrons, 600-650 pilots**. The Soviet Air Force (fighter aviation of five western districts and two navies) had about **260 squadrons, 3550 pilots** (there were much more fighter aircraft, since many air regiments accumulated a double set of aircraft in connection with the re-equipment with new types of fighters) . Is it necessary to prove that under such conditions the German command had neither the opportunity nor the desire to provide

"charitable assistance" to the newly acquired allies. The state of affairs was determined by the words "ours are not enough." Even for the defense of the most important strategic object - the region of the Romanian oil fields Ploiesti, in the preservation of which Germany was perhaps more interested than Romania itself - only one fighter group (III / JG-52) was allocated. Taking into account the aircraft of the headquarters of the 52nd squadron, the oil fields were covered by only 47 Messerschmitts. Let us now move from the general to the particular, to an analysis of the situation on the northern flank of the war. The offensive

of the Army Group "North" from East Prussia through the Baltic states and Pskov to Leningrad was supported from the air by the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe. The fleet included 8 bombers (II, III / KG-1, I, II, III / KG-76, I, II, III / KG-77) and 4 fighters (I, II, III / JG-54, II / JG-53) groups, which were armed with (including faulty vehicles) 240 medium twin-engine Ju-88 bombers and 164 single-engine Bf-109F fighters. A total of 404 combat aircraft. Neither

there was not one Ju-87 dive bomber (this is an integral part of any "documentary" film about the beginning of the war), not a single Me-110 fighter-bomber was part of the 1st Air Fleet. Which, in particular, means very limited opportunities for targeted bombing of such point targets as aircraft on the airfields of airfields ...

In brackets, we note that in most publications of domestic historians, even in the most recent ones (242), at least one and a half times more aircraft are "found" in the 1st Air Fleet. Graceful cheating tricks (not changing at all over the past half century) continue to please the eye. The first and foremost is the summation of combat aircraft (fighters, bombers, attack aircraft) with reconnaissance, communications, transport, ambulance aircraft and airplanes. Of course, such summation is carried out only in relation to German aviation. And since there are always a lot of auxiliary aircraft quantitatively, then the numbers are obtained to your heart's content. It's like writing: "In the yard of the peasant Pupkin live two horses, one bull, two cows and 20 sheep, and only 25 heads of cattle." And isn't that true? Well, to top it all off, two groups from the German air defense were added to the number of fighters of the 1st Air Fleet, not a single plane of which had ever crossed the border of the USSR; reconnaissance seaplanes from the Fliegerführer Ostsee formation are added to the bombers, which have never appeared in the sky over the Soviet Baltic ... As a result, Air Chief Marshal A.A. Novikov, in his memoirs, without a shadow of embarrassment, reports that *"in the first days of July, the 1st Air Fleet of the Germans, which had 1070 combat vehicles, began to operate in the Leningrad direction as well ..."*

However, the phrase mentioned above contains an important (and for the purposes of this chapter - the most important) recognition: units and formations of the 1st Air Force of the Luftwaffe in the "Leningrad direction" appeared "in the first days of July", i.e., only after how the catastrophic defeat of the North-Western Front (Baltic OVO) allowed the German command to relocate the Luftwaffe air group from East Prussia to the airfields of the occupied Baltic and the Pskov region. In the very first days of the war, the connection

1st V.f. fought against the aviation of the North-Western Front (three times the enemy in the number of aircraft and twice in the number of crews) and supported the offensive of the 41st and 56th tank corps of the Wehrmacht from the air. Of course, **no relocation of parts of the 1st V.f. there were no German troops to Finland, i.e., many hundreds of kilometers from the combat area**, and the air groups of the 1st Air Fleet were not directly related to the events that took place in the first weeks of the war in the sky over Leningrad and the cities of Karelia. The first (and at the same time unsuccessful) attempt by German bombers to break through to Leningrad from the southwestern direction was made **only on July 20**. The first massive raid on Leningrad took place even later - on September 6, 1941 (254, pp. 57, 70).

The German 5th Air Fleet operated in the far north of Europe. Air groups of the 5th V.f. based on the airfields occupied in the spring of 1940 Norway. The main task of the 5th V.f. there was protection of the gigantic (more than 2000 km), coastline of Norway, cut by countless skerries, from a possible landing of English amphibious assault forces. In addition, on the 5th V.f. tasks of reconnaissance and combat against British transport and warships in the North Atlantic were assigned. With such extensive tasks, the 5th V.f. was the smallest in the Luftwaffe (as of June 24, 1941, the fleet included 283 combat aircraft of all types, of which only 189 were operational). It is no secret that operations in the Soviet Arctic, with the aim of capturing Murmansk and Kandalaksha, seemed to the

Wehrmacht command a senseless diversion of forces from solving the main tasks. And within the framework of the installation on the defeat of the Soviet Union during the short-term campaign, this skepticism was fully justified.

The transport "corridor" from the United States across the North Atlantic to Murmansk acquired strategic importance much later. Moreover, in the spring of 1941, no one could say with certainty whether Soviet-American military cooperation would arise at all. Nevertheless, Hitler's order had to be carried out, and the army command planned two offensive operations (from the Petsamo region to Murmansk, from the Salla region to Kandalaksha), and

the command of the 5th Air Fleet formed a special "Kirkenes air force", which was entrusted with supporting the offensive of German troops in the Arctic. Under the command of

Colonel Nielsen, as part of the "air connection Kirkenes" were the following units and subdivisions: - a group of dive bombers "IV / StG-1"; - one squadron from the bomber group "II / KG-30"; - two squadrons from the fighter group "IV / JG-77"; - one link of multi-role fighter-bombers from the Z / JG-77. In mid-June 1941, these units and subunits were concentrated in

northern Norway, at the airfields of Hebukten (near the city of Kirkenes) and Banak (near the city of Lakselven). As of June 24, 1941, the Luftwaffe grouping near the borders of the USSR included:

- 42 Ju-87 dive bombers, of which 39 (according to other sources - 33) are in good condition;
- 12 medium twin-engine bombers "Ju-88", of which 10 in good condition;
- 22

Messerschmitt Bf-109E fighters; - 4 twin-engine fighter-bomber "Me-110". In fact, one of the two fighter squadrons was based at the Banak airfield (250 km west of the Soviet border) and practically did not participate in hostilities. The fighter cover of the German troops advancing on Murmansk was to be provided by the forces of a single Messerschmitt squadron. After the outbreak of the Soviet-German war (but even before the start of the offensive of the Dietl mountain rifle corps on Murmansk), this squadron (13 / JG-77) was relocated to the Luostari airfield located in **Finland**, a few kilometers from the border with the USSR. These 10 serviceable Messerschmitts at the Luostari airfield were **the first and only Luftwaffe fighter unit** based in Finland.

One long-range reconnaissance unit (3 twin-engine Dornier Do-17s) from the 124th reconnaissance unit was also transferred to the operational subordination of the Kirkenes air force command.

group (1.(F)/124). This unit was based **at the airfield of the Finnish city of Rovaniemi** and, starting from June 18, 1941, made several reconnaissance raids over Soviet territory. Most likely, the flight over Kandalaksha of these aircraft was recorded in the reports of the command of the Northern Fleet.

Thus, **even before June 25, 1941, German aviation was based in northern Finland, consisting of one squadron of fighters and one link of long-range reconnaissance, a total of 13 serviceable aircraft.** Of course, this "aviation" could not subject Leningrad to a *"furious bombardment"* (which, according to Marshal Novikov, the Soviet command expected). And not only because fighters are not adapted for solving such problems. From Luostari to Leningrad - 1100 km in a straight line. The estimated range of the Messerschmitt Bf-109E is not enough even for a suicidal one-way flight ... The German aviation group in the Arctic was opposed by

the 1st Air Division (1 SAD) of the Soviet Air Force and the aviation of the Northern Fleet. The 1st SAD included three air regiments: two fighter (145 IAP, 147 IAP) and one bomber (137 BAP). The Air Force of the Northern Fleet included the so-called mixed aviation regiment (72 SAP), which included fighter, bomber and reconnaissance squadrons. By the beginning of hostilities (June 29, 1941), the grouping of Soviet aviation in the Arctic consisted of:

- 49 light twin-engine bombers "SB", of which 43 - in good condition; - 72

- I-16 fighters, of which 67 are in good condition; - 51 I-153 fighters, 48 of them are in good condition. Thus, in terms of the number of bombers, the forces of the parties were approximately equal, while in terms of the number of combat-ready fighters, the Soviet Air Force had an 11-fold superiority. Strictly speaking, 147 IAP and 72 SAP were armed with 47 more I-15bis fighters, but this machine was already outdated by that time and was hardly suitable for air combat (these aircraft were used mainly for attacking ground targets).

German aviation was also based on the territory of southern (more precisely, central) Finland. This "aviation" consisted of **one link** of long-range scouts under the command of Hauptmann

Bolle. This unit was armed with **three aircraft** (two Dornier "Do-215" and one "Heinkel" "He-111"). From June 20 to September 13, 1941, this link was based at the Finnish airfield Luonetjärvi (near the city of Jyväskylä), from where it repeatedly made reconnaissance flights over Soviet territory. Let's summarize. Even

before the start of Soviet air strikes on Finland (that is, until June 25, 1941), **three units of German aviation were based on Finnish territory:** - a fighter squadron at the Luostari airfield

(Petsamo region); - a reconnaissance unit at the Rovaniemi airfield

(northern Finland); - a reconnaissance unit at the Luonetjärvi airfield (near

the city of Jyväskylä, central Finland). **A total of 18 aircraft (12 fighters, 6 long-range**

reconnaissance aircraft, 0 bombers). That's all there was. The remaining 2326

combat aircraft (99.23% of the total number of the Luftwaffe grouping deployed for the war against the USSR) were based in northern Norway, East Prussia, occupied Poland and Romania. By June 25, 1941, many Luftwaffe air units (primarily fighter units) were already based **on Soviet airfields**. Of course, the above figure (99.23%) should not be taken too seriously, since the number of "Luftwaffe groupings in Finland" (18 aircraft) is much less than the arithmetic error in determining the total number of German aircraft on the Eastern Front.

However, basing aviation does not exhaust all the possibilities of using the territory of a friendly country. For example, American aviation has never been based on the territory of the USSR (at least, such expressions are not used in any book known to us). Nevertheless, it is a widely known fact that in the summer of 1944 Allied bombers based in the British Isles, having bombed German military installations in southern Poland, landed on Soviet territory (near Poltava), where they were refueled for the return flight.

Something similar happened in June 1941. Here we must return to the KGr-806 bomber group mentioned above. This air group (30 Junkers Ju-88s, 18 of them in good condition) was part of the Baltic Air Command, was based in East Prussia (Proverén airfield) and was supposed to act in the interests of the Naval Forces. The main task of the German Navy was to "lock up" the Red Banner Baltic Fleet (in terms of the number and tonnage of surface warships, it completely surpassed the available forces of the German fleet) in the Gulf of Finland and prevent it from entering the southwestern part of the Baltic Sea. The Germans solved this problem with great success for themselves, setting up a dense system of minefields at the exit from the Gulf of Finland (in the strip from Hango to Dago Island) in the first two or three days of the war. After that, the surface ships of the Baltic Fleet did not even make a single attempt to enter the greater Baltic.

Nevertheless, "the pocket does not pull the stock", and simultaneously with the installation of minefields at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, the German command planned the installation of bottom magnetic mines in the Kronstadt area. To accomplish this task, one squadron (10 aircraft) from the KGr-806 and one link (4 Junkers Ju-88) from the Kü.Fl.Gr-506 "coastal" air group were involved. Theoretically, the estimated flight range of the Ju-88 made it possible to complete this task without intermediate landings and refueling. The distance from Kronstadt to the Proverén airfield is 900 km in a straight line, and the maximum flight range of the Junkers Ju 88A-5 given in any reference book is 2250 km. But for the maximum range you have to "pay" with the minimum weight of the bomb load, which in this case was undesirable for the Germans. Therefore, it was decided after completing the task **to land for refueling in Finland, at the Utti airfield** (near Kouvola station). At the same time, the total length of the route was almost halved, and each

Junkers was able to take two heavy aircraft mines weighing 985 kg each. The raid was carried out in the early morning of June 22, 1941. In the area of the

Kronstadt naval base, (according to Soviet data) 25

bottom magnetic mines. The fact that the operation was carried out in the first hours of the war is by no means accidental.

Heavily loaded Junkers without any fighter cover had to operate in an area where several hundred Soviet fighters could theoretically be raised to intercept them. Under such conditions, only the suddenness of the strike allowed the Germans to count on success.

In addition to the air raid on the night of June 21-22, KGr-806 bombers appeared in the airspace over the Gulf of Finland and the Karelian Isthmus and on the night of June 22-23 (see the next chapter). Most likely, they carried out a similar task of mining the approaches to Kronstadt, followed by landing and refueling at the Finnish airfields Utti, Hyvinkä and Malmi (the last two in the Helsinki region), but this version requires further research.

Having completed the search for the slightest traces of German aviation on Finnish soil, we now turn to a brief review of the composition and deployment of that aviation, the presence of which on the territory of Finland is beyond doubt. By June 1941, the Finnish Air Force had 5 fighter groups ("LLv̈y24", "LLv̈y26", "LLv̈y28", "LLv̈y30", "LLv̈y32"), armed with (including faulty machines) were, respectively, 33, 26, 27, 23 and 24 aircraft.

In addition, the air groups "LLv-6", "LLv-12" and "LLv-14" were, respectively, 5, 10 and 12 fighters. Thus, in total, there were **160 fighter aircraft** of eight (!) Different types in the combat units of the Finnish Air Force. We will talk about the deployment, armament and combat capabilities of the Finnish fighter aircraft in the following chapters, devoted to the course and outcome of the Soviet "bomber offensive" on June 25-26. In this chapter, one should decide on the composition and combat capabilities of Finnish bomber aircraft. Bomber aviation of Finland consisted

of three groups ("LLv̈y42", "LLv̈y44", "LLv̈y46"), armed with 9 (nine), 8 (eight) **and 7 (seven) aircraft, respectively.** The main base was the Siikakangas airfield (45 km northeast of Tampere), where LLv-42 and

LLv-44. The headquarters of Lentorykmentti-4 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Somerto and the bombers of the LLv-46 group were based at the Luonetjärvi airfield. In addition, as part of the understaffed group of bombers already mentioned "LLv-6" was [link](#) above (three captured Soviet SBs captured during the "winter war"). This group was based in the area of the city of Turku. **In total, the bomber units of the Finnish Air Force were thus armed with 27 aircraft.** The main types of bombers were the English

Blenheim (20 aircraft) and the captured Soviet SB (3 aircraft). The LLv-46 group included 4 more aircraft, which in various sources are designated as captured Soviet DB-3s and American transport Douglas DC-3s. According to the main tactical, technical and weight characteristics, according to the time of development, the Blenheim was the "sibling" of the most massive Soviet SB bomber. The first flight of the Tupolev SB took place on December 30, 1934, the first Blenheim took to the skies on April 12, 1935. The basic design concept of these aircraft was also common: a light twin-engine bomber with a very modest bomb load weight, but at the same time having a high maximum speed, allowing you to avoid meeting with enemy fighters.

	Вес пустого	Вес взлетный	Мощность двигателей	Скорость у земли	Скорость максим.	Макс. бомб. нагрузка, кг	Макс. дальность при бомбовой нагрузке
«Бленхейм» Mk-IV	4441	6356	2*905 л.с.	350	447	600	1870 км / 454 кг
СБ бис-2 (1939 г.)	4427	6175	2*950 л.с.	375	425	1600	1350 км / 500 кг

By the summer of 1941, both aircraft were obsolete. The idea behind their design turned out to be stillborn. The best fighter planes (the Soviet MiG-3, the German Messerschmitt Bf-109F-2) developed a maximum speed of 628 and 600 km/h, respectively, and overtook the so-called "high-speed bombers" of the 30s with the same ease with which a sports car overtakes a pedestrian. True, serious efforts were made in the Soviet Union to improve the Security Council. At the end of 1940, the serial production of the latest modification of this combat vehicle, the Ar-2 dive (!) bomber, began. Thanks to a significantly "ennobled" aerodynamics and the installation of

uprated to a power of 1100 hp. engines "M-105" diving "Ar-2" developed a speed of 443 km / h near the ground and 512 km / h at an altitude of 5 km. The design allowed dropping both internal and external bombs from a dive (maximum 2 bombs FABÿ500 + 2 FABÿ250). Unfortunately, in February 1941, the production of "Ar-2" was

collapsed. In total, 198 Ar-2 dive bombers were produced.

Returning to the events of June 1941, we must admit that two dozen Finnish bombers, taking off from airfields in the Tampere and Jyväskylä regions, were theoretically capable of bombing Leningrad (400 km in a straight line from Tampere). It is equally important to immediately note another indisputable fact: the distance from Tampere to Leningrad, to the nearest micron, is equal to the distance from Leningrad to Tampere, therefore, the Soviet Air Force also had the technical ability to strike at the airfields based on the Finnish bomber groups. This is all the more true because the bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, along with the SB, were also long-range bombers DB-3f (91 serviceable aircraft) with a maximum flight range of more than 3000 km.

And yet - not a single Soviet air bomb fell on the airfields of Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi. Moreover, during June 25–26, Soviet aviation did not even make a single attempt to attack these airfields. This fact alone casts serious doubt on the version that the command of the Red Army was very concerned that the frail forces of the Finnish (or

based on Finnish airfields German) aviation subjected Leningrad to a *"violent bombardment"*. However, taking into account the composition and strength of the air defense of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Air Force of the Northern Front (Leningrad VO) and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, there should have been no reason for concern.

Turning from the aviation of Finland to a brief overview of the Soviet Air Force, we, like the fabulous Gulliver, get from the "land of midgets to the land of giants" (see Map No. 10). Closest to the border with Finland was the 5th IAD (division headquarters in Vyborg). Two fighter regiments of this division (7 IAP and 159 IAP) were based on the Karelian Isthmus (airfields of Suurmerioki, Maisniemi, Grivochki), the third regiment (158 IAP) was located at the "directly opposite end" of the territory of the district, in the area south of Pskov (Veretenye airfield). In addition, on the Karelian Isthmus, in the area of Kexholm, 153 IAPs from the 55th SAD were based (division headquarters in Petrozavodsk).

Three fighter air divisions were deployed in the immediate vicinity of Leningrad: 3rd IAD (headquarters in Gorelovo), 39th IAD (headquarters in Pushkin), 54th IAD (headquarters in Levashovo). At the airfields of Gorelovo, Vitino, Ropsha, Zaitsevo, Lezier, Kolpino, Levashovo, Uglovo, 19 IAP, 44 IAP, 154 IAP, 156 IAP, 26 IAP, 157 IAP were based.

Another regiment (155th IAP from the 39th IAD) was based at the Gorodets airfield (120 km south of Leningrad).

The necessary clarification refers to the very term "aerodrome". All the aforementioned airfields were among the so-called base ones, that is, in addition to the actual airfield, there should have been everything necessary for the combat work of flight personnel and aviation equipment (fuel and ammunition supplies, repair, technical, sanitary, meteorological services and units). Along with the basic ones, there were also so-called operational airfields, which had only the minimum necessary equipment for flight operations. In an era when a fighter aircraft weighed 2-3 tons and had a landing speed of no more than 120-140 km / h, a flat field could be used as an operational airfield in summer after minimal preparation of the runway, equipment of the simplest shelters for flight and technical

composition and installation of several gas tanks. That is why the number of operational airfields was many times greater than the number of base airfields.

So, in the western military districts of the USSR, as of January 1, 1941, there were 614 airfields of all types, and by July 15, another 164 airfields were built. In particular, as of January 1, 1941, there were already 86 airfields in the Leningrad Military District, and another 25 were built in the first half

of the year (272). The nine air regiments named above (not counting the 158 IAP and 155 IAP) included **472 fighter pilots**. There were many more planes. It is almost impossible to give an exact number, since the Air Force of the Leningrad District was undergoing an intensive replacement of the aircraft fleet, and in some fighter regiments (7 IAP, 159 IAP, 153 IAP) there were twice as many aircraft as pilots. The approximate number of fighter aircraft in the above nine air regiments can be estimated at 620-650 **units, including at least 160 of the latest MiG-3 fighters** (the fighter units of the Leningrad District received MiGs among the very first, in February - March 1941 G.). Judging by the memoirs of the former commander of the district air force, another 105 MiGs were in the process of assembly and flight. The composition of the

fighter aircraft of the Leningrad District was not exhausted by the regiments indicated above. On the eve of the war, eight more air regiments were in the formation stage in the LenVO. Thus, the 191st, 192nd, 193rd fighter regiments were formed at the Maisniemi airfield (Karelian Isthmus). In addition, 38 IAPs (47 serviceable I-16s, 53 pilots) were based in the Tallinn area. This regiment was organizationally part of the Air Force of the North-Western Front, but territorially it was closer to Helsinki than all others, and practically did not participate in the hostilities of the North-Western Front in the first days of the war (the Germans approached Estonia much later).

In addition, the main forces of the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet were based in the immediate vicinity of Leningrad, including the 61st Fighter Brigade (the headquarters of the brigade was New Peterhof). In total, three fighter regiments and seven separate squadrons of the KBF Air Force were armed with (according to various sources) **about 350 fighter aircraft**, of which

about 300 were in combat-ready condition (137 I-16, 100 I-153, 32 MiG-3, 8 Yak-1) (263). Without pretending to be particularly accurate, we can say that in general, **the Soviet command could counter each Finnish Air Force bomber with about 30 fighters.** Fighter aviation was the main, but

not the only component of the air defense system. In addition to fighter aircraft, ground-based anti-aircraft artillery

also existed to combat enemy aircraft. This component of the air defense system in Russian historiography is rarely remembered, reluctantly, with an obligatory sob ("at the beginning of the war, there was an acute shortage of anti-aircraft weapons ..."). There is no need to argue with this. Anti-aircraft weapons - like money - are always "sorely lacking." But not everywhere is equally "sharp". As already noted in previous chapters, by the beginning of the "winter war" Finland was armed with 38 (thirty-eight) medium-caliber anti-aircraft guns (76-mm "Bofors" "M / 29") and 53 (fifty-three) small-caliber 40-mm "Bofors" "M / 38". The capital of the British Empire, the city of London, during

the famous "battle for England" (September - October 1940) was defended by 452 anti-aircraft guns of all calibers.

By the spring of 1941, the anti-aircraft artillery of Leningrad (2nd Air Defense Corps) had been re-equipped with the latest 85-mm anti-aircraft guns (194, p. 31). The former 76-mm anti-aircraft guns also remained in the district, as a result, by the beginning of the war, the 2nd Air Defense Corps was armed with about **600 85-mm guns, 246 76-mm guns, 60 small-caliber guns**, 230 anti-aircraft machine guns. As well as 483 searchlight stations, 297 barrage balloons and 8 RUS-1 radar stations (154).

All radars, organizationally part of the 72nd separate radio battalion, were deployed in the "Finnish direction". The first "line" of five radar stations ran along the border with Finland and the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, from Korpiselka to Kingisepp. Three other radars were deployed in the area of Pitkyaranta, Kexholm, Ligovo.

The naval bases of the Baltic Fleet, of course, had their own separate air defense systems. So, the Kronstadt naval base was defended (in addition to the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery of warships)

and 48 anti-aircraft guns of 76-mm caliber and 8 anti-aircraft guns of 85-mm caliber. In addition, the Northern Air Defense Zone (commanded by Major General F. Ya. Kryukov) included the Vyborg Air Defense Brigade District (the 474th anti-aircraft artillery regiment in Vyborg and the 225th separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion in the city of Keksholm). The southern approaches to Leningrad were covered by the Luga air defense brigade area, which included six anti-aircraft artillery battalions.

These facts are quite eloquent and hardly need special comments. But it is impossible not to cite the competent opinion of the Chief Marshal of Aviation of the USSR, the former commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad District A.A. Novikova: *"In the north of Leningrad, the enemy put Finnish aviation and the 5th German Air Fleet against us - a total of 900 aircraft. The aviation of the district could cope with such forces. But in the first days of July..."* (244, p. 67). and Finnish aviation, then, presumably, the real enemy grouping (no more than fifty Finnish and German bombers at the airfields of southern and central Finland) did not create for Leningrad the threat of an "insurmountable

strength"...

Chapter 3.5

Flying in a dream and in reality

Having dealt with the composition and deployment of Finnish aviation and German aviation units based in Finland, let's move on to the second question - what kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group carry out during June 22–24, 1941? Before proceeding to consider the few documents available and the facts that have become known, it is nevertheless necessary to make one remark of a general nature. The transition from a peaceful life (even if this

life took place in the form of service in the army or navy) to war, to the continuous and every second threat of losing life, health, good name (in case of failure to fulfill the assigned combat mission) is the strongest stress. This word ("stress") was not in vogue at that time, but the inevitable stress itself and the mistakes it inevitably caused, confusion, sometimes panic, were many times intensified by the mysterious pre-war "Stalin's games". The meaning of these "games" to this day causes fierce disputes among historians. It was even less clear to contemporaries of the events, the senior commanders of the Red Army and Navy, who were required to *"meet a possible surprise strike"*, but at the same time *"carefully disguise the increase in combat readiness"* and *"not succumb to provocations"* (121, p. 424).

The reader who is fairly familiar with Russian memoirs and historical journalism should be aware of the widespread legend "about Admiral Kuznetsov and Sevastopol." Summary of the legend: People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov "was not afraid to violate Stalin's ban" and gave the fateful order to put the fleet on "combat readiness", as a result of which the first German air raid on Sevastopol was successfully repulsed, and with heavy losses for the aggressor .

A slightly more detailed examination of the factual side of the case reveals the following details.

The directive of the People's Commissar of the Navy, sent at 1:50 on June 22 to the command of the fleets, almost verbatim repeated a similar Directive No. 1 sent to the command of the military districts signed by People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko, and included **all the above ambiguous instructions**. In the main base of the Black Sea Fleet, events unfolded as follows. At 02:15 on June 22, the air defense headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet ordered the introduction of a blackout regime in Sevastopol. For a full guarantee, the "main switch" of the city's energy supply was centrally turned off. Sevastopol plunged into the pitch darkness of the southern summer night, in which the lights of two lighthouses shone dazzlingly: Inkerman and Chersonesos. Wired communication with them was interrupted (presumably by saboteurs). The messenger from the headquarters never reached the Inkerman lighthouse, and the lighthouse, whose visibility range was 24 nautical miles, continued to burn, unmasking the city and port.

At 02:35 on June 22, the RUS-1 radar station at Cape Tarkhankut detected an aerial target coming from the west. At 03:05, direction-finding stations recorded the noise of aircraft engines at a distance of 20 km from Sevastopol. The technique worked flawlessly. It was more difficult with people. Commanders of all ranks began to feverishly find out who could be responsible for making the decision to open fire. For some reason, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral Oktyabrsky, began calling Moscow, the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov, although the fleet was not subordinate to Zhukov. Zhukov, evading any specific instructions, advised "to report to the People's Commissar of the Navy." The operational duty officer at the fleet headquarters (that night was the flagship chemist of the Black Sea Fleet, captain of the 2nd rank N.T. Rybalko), in turn, received the following instruction from Admiral Oktyabrsky: "Keep in mind that if there is at least one of *our aircraft in the air* *You will be shot tomorrow.*" If you believe the memoirs of N.T. Rybalko, he and the chief of staff of the fleet, Rear Admiral I.D. Eliseev nevertheless decided to open fire on unknown aircraft. After that, the following conversation took place between Rybalko and the commander of the air defense of the fleet, Colonel I.S. Zhilin:

"... I immediately call Colonel Zhilin, I give the order to open fire. Colonel Zhilin replied: "Keep in mind that you are fully responsible for this order. I write it down in the war diary." I repeat the order of comrade. Zhilin and say: "Write down where you want, I understand my responsibility, but open fire on the planes." On this conversation with him

ended..."

True, Zhilin himself writes in his memoirs that neither from the chief of staff of the fleet, nor from the chief of staff of the Air Force of the Black Sea Fleet, Colonel Kalmykov, he could get any specific instructions, and at his own peril and risk he ordered the commanders of the air defense units "all the aircraft that *appear in the area of Sevastopol, consider them as enemy, illuminate them with searchlights and open fire on them.* Even if such an order was actually issued, it was poorly carried out. The first bomber appeared over Sevastopol at 03:13 on 22 June. He was discovered and illuminated by searchlights, but at the same moment an order was received to turn off the searchlights and not open fire. Chief of Staff of the 61st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment I.K. Semyonov explained this by an order from the air defense headquarters of the fleet, but Zhilin refers to the fuzzy actions of the regiment commander himself. Be that as it may, the first Heinkel-111 dropped two heavy magnetic mines into the waters of the Sevastopol Bay and flew away with impunity. In total, 4 (four) German Heinkel-111 bombers

from the KG-27 air group based in Romania took part in the first raid on the main base of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. The planes approached the target one at a time, with long time intervals (15–25 minutes) and dropped bottom magnetic mines by parachute. A total of 8 minutes were reset. These mines (more precisely, their parachutes) caused additional panic at the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, where it was decided that the enemy was dropping an airborne assault in order to capture the headquarters of the fleet. From the commanders who were in the headquarters, a detachment was hastily created, which was instructed to take up all-round defense ... The second, third and fourth Heinkel were fired upon by anti-aircraft artillery of the air defense of

Sevastopol. A total of 2150 shells were fired (an average of 500 per enemy aircraft). In addition, anti-aircraft artillery fired on German bombers.

ships. Not a single aircraft was shot down, but the accuracy of dropping mines under the fire of Soviet anti-aircraft guns dropped sharply. Only one mine out of six hit the bay, three mines exploded on land, and two fell in shallow water and automatically exploded. The entry in the War Diary and the testimonies of many participants in the events indicate that the fourth bomber was shot down at 4:10 and fell into the sea, however, judging by German documents, the KG-27 group did not have any irretrievable losses that day (unlike, for example, KG-55, which on June 22 irretrievably lost 11 He-111 aircraft in the sky over Western

Ukraine) (245). Such were the real events of the early morning of June 22, 1941 in Sevastopol. The newspaper "Krasny Krym" in an article entitled "So it was" described them on June 24, 1941 as follows:

"... Numerous intersecting beams of searchlights continued to stubbornly search the sky covered with ominous clouds. And when a thick layer of clouds broke for a moment, the beams of searchlights overtook the robber cars in the gaps formed. In vain, floundering, rushing from side to side, the vultures tried to hide again behind thick clouds, under the cover of a dark night. The well-aimed artillery fire of our batteries was directed directly at the target ... The enemy unsuccessfully tried to hide behind the clouds, well-aimed fire overtook him everywhere.

Here is one of the robber planes, hit by a cannon shell, rushed up and, tumbling, engulfed in ever-growing flames, swiftly fell like a stone into the sea. The same fate soon befell another fascist bomber. The rest fled in panic. The German fascists who attacked Sevastopol received a worthy rebuff ... "

And here is another description of the same events (we will not name the author of the

memoirs): *"... At a quarter past four, the powerful beams of searchlights cut the cloudless starry sky and swayed like pendulums, feeling the sky, over which, growing with every second, a monotonous rumble spread. Finally, a fearsome armada of low-flying planes appeared from the sea . **Their endless rows of crows alternately swept** (underlined by me. - M.S.) along the Northern Bay. Batteries of coastal anti-aircraft artillery and ships of the squadron*

they opened hurricane fire on them and mixed up the battle formation ... The gloomy silhouettes of still unknown bombers either flashed in the beams of the searchlights, then disappeared in the void of the sky, then they were again seized by the searchlights and led to the end of the Northern Bay ... In the end, several planes were shot down. We clearly saw how one of the planes fell into the sea ... "

Probably, the reader has already had a question: why all this story about events in the Black Sea, so far from Leningrad and Finland? The answer is simple: without a clear understanding of the psychological atmosphere of the first day of the war, it is impossible to adequately read and understand the documents of that time and the memories of the participants in the events. For example, the commander of the 1st brigade of submarines of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, captain of the 1st rank N.P. Egipko

writes in his memoirs: *"In the afternoon (June 22) over Ust-Dvinsk, where the submarine brigade was located, 15–20 aircraft with red stars on their wings flew towards Riga. I got a good look at these markings through binoculars. Somewhat later we heard explosions near the airfield near Riga. I, as a senior naval commander in Ust-Dvinsk, ordered to open anti-aircraft fire in the event of the return of enemy aircraft. But when returning, the planes went further into the sea, and anti-aircraft fire was unsuccessful ... "* (246)

Now let's move on from the memoirs to the original documents. The Combat Order (b / n) dated June 23, 1941, signed by the chief of staff of the 1st MK, Colonel Limarenko, says: *"Cases of raids by German aircraft with red stars have been recorded"* (249). And in the order of the commander of 163 MD (1 MK) dated June 24, 1941, we read: *"Fascist aircraft use the coloring and signs of Soviet aircraft"* (250). No less indicative is the following fragment from the Report on the combat operations of the Sortavala border detachment (signed by Captain Boldyrev on October 24, 1941): "...

Since June 24, enemy aircraft regularly began to make reconnaissance flights to our territory with a flight to a depth of 2–6 km. From June 28, 1941, enemy planes, taking advantage of the lack of active means of combat in the rear of the detachment's area, began to fire machine guns at settlements, trains, drop bombs on railway bridges and the canvas.

The absolute majority (emphasized by me. - M.S.) *of enemy aircraft flew with identification marks of the USSR ...* ” (264, p. 446) What was it?

With a probability close to 100%, it can be argued that Soviet identification marks **were never applied to combat aircraft of the Luftwaffe and Finnish aviation**, and all reports of the first days of the war about the bombardment of positions of Soviet troops by red star aircraft are the fruit of confusion and chaos. It's just that in some cases this confusion manifested itself in the appearance of reports based only on unverified rumors, in others - in the actual facts of the bombing of one's own troops (however, there were no less cases of shelling one's own aircraft with anti-aircraft artillery). All of the above should not be understood as a call for indiscriminate denial of the authenticity of any documents from the first days of the war. Of course not - documents must be studied, their authenticity checked, compared with other known facts and documents. Not to reject “out of the blue”, but also not to turn every letter of an archival document into an indisputable truth only on the grounds that the paper on which this “letter” is written has already turned yellow from time ...

June 22, 1941 First day of the war.

Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of the Northern Front, signed by Major General Nikishev at 22:00 on June 22, 1941, occupies three pages of typewritten text (251). **There is no mention of enemy air raids in the summary of the front**

headquarters. As for the four fighter air divisions that directly covered Leningrad (5th IAD, 39th IAD, 3rd IAD, 54th IAD), in the time period of interest to us, only operational documents of the 39th IAD are available. The 54th IAD fund could not be found (perhaps this is due to the fact that on June 19, 1941, the USSR People's Commissar of Defense issued an order to reorganize the 3rd and 54th divisions into the 7th air defense fighter air corps of the country). Fund 3 of the IAD contains only documents of the political department of a later period and still secret documents of the military prosecutor's office; operational do

stored in the fund of the 5th IAD, for some reason, begin on August 15, 1941 ...

In the operational report of the 39th IAD (headquarters in Pushkin) No. 1 of 6:00 on June 23, 1941 we read: "39th IAD from 2:30 on June 22 until 06:00 on June 23, she did not make sorties, having units in combat readiness" (252). Reconnaissance report No. 01 dated 18:00 on June 22 states: "Enemy aircraft in the area where division units are based are not marked."

This is the information that the headquarters of the 39th IAD received independently. But in that part of Intelligence Report No. 01, which was based on information received from neighbors and / or higher headquarters, a description of **two episodes** of the war in the air

appears: "Five links of the Me-110 heading for Kronstadt, one link at an altitude of 1500 m, two links - at an altitude of 70-80 m. During the shelling of our ZA and the appearance of our fighters, they went to Virolahti (a settlement on the coast of the Gulf of Finland near the border. - M.S.).

At 04:00, two three-engine enemy aircraft torpedoed vessels in the Kronstadt area, one enemy aircraft was shot down by our ZA" (253). Most likely,

the former commander of the Air Force of the Northern Front (Leningrad District) A.A. writes in his memoirs about the same two episodes. Novikov: "...

The war entered the city at 3 o'clock in the morning, when the Leningraders were still fast asleep. At this time, nine fighters flew high in the sky, led by Senior Lieutenant Mikhail Gneushev. Twenty minutes later, the first air battle broke out near Leningrad - fighter pilots Shavrov and Boyko entered the battle with the Me-110 link. At 4 o'clock in the morning, 12 German planes tried to mine the fairway in the Gulf of Finland, but were driven away by naval pilots. Somewhat later, 14 Me-109s made an attempt to storm one of our airfields near Vyborg. The enemy was met and driven off by a group of pilots of the 7th Fighter Aviation Regiment, led by Senior Lieutenant Nikolai Svitenko" (244, p. 46).

In the well-known monograph "Under the Wing - Leningrad", written by Lieutenant Colonel I.G. Inozemtsev, the same events are described as follows:

"... At four o'clock in the morning, 12 aircraft in three groups raided the Kronstadt area and dropped mines into the waters of the Gulf of Finland. At the same time, 14 Me-110 twin-engine fighters appeared at low altitude near the airfield near the city of Vyborg. An alert unit of I-153 aircraft of the 7th Fighter Aviation Regiment took off to meet them, followed by four more fighters led by the squadron commander, Senior Lieutenant N.I. Svitenko. The Soviet pilots attacked the Messerschmitts, who, not accepting the battle, hurried to hide towards the Gulf of Finland ... " (254, p. 36) The episode with the twin-engine Me-110s

is fictional from beginning to end. There were no aircraft of this type in the 1st Air Force of the Luftwaffe at all. As part of the 5th V.f. they were, but four Me-110s from the Banak airfield in the far north of Norway could not fly to Vyborg even "one way". Neither in the Finnish Air Force, nor in the Luftwaffe units, at least occasionally appearing in June 41st at Finnish airfields, the Me-110 was never listed. Finally, the message that 14 Me-110s "hurried to escape" from one link (3 aircraft) of the I-153 biplanes, which were rather outdated by that time, looks completely implausible. If such a meeting had taken place in reality, then most likely the account of the losses of the Air Force of the Leningrad District would have been opened already in the early morning of June 22 ... It is even difficult to imagine what real event could cause rumors

about "14 twin-engine fighters" over Vyborg. Only the Dornier Do-215 (twin-engine and two-keel) had a certain external resemblance to the Me-110, and in the predawn twilight these aircraft could be confused. Two Do-215s were part of a long-range reconnaissance unit at the Finnish airfield Luonetjärvi. However, 2 is not 14, and long-range reconnaissance aircraft flew over the deep rear of the enemy at the highest possible high altitude. Neither at an altitude of 1500 m, nor even at an altitude of 70-80 m above the ground, long-range reconnaissance aircraft fly - this is both dangerous and impractical (the field of view of the enemy's territory is reduced). In the reports of the command of the border troops of the NKVD , *"endless rows of crows"* from *"43 German aircraft"*

appear at all ,

who at 03:50 on June 22 allegedly "*violated the border and headed for the Karelian Isthmus*" (264, p. 381). True, this "*terrifying armada of low-flying aircraft*" did not leave any material traces in the form of aircraft shot down and crashed on Soviet territory, dropped bombs, craters and destruction ... "Two three-engine enemy aircraft", which allegedly "torpedoed ships in the

Kronstadt area", the same - "12 German aircraft that tried to mine the fairway in the Gulf of Finland" - these are most likely the same 14 "Junkers" "Ju-88" from the air groups "KGr-806" and "Kü.Fl.Gr-506", which at dawn on June 22, the approaches to the Kronstadt naval base were mined, and after the successful completion of the task ("they were driven away by naval pilots" only in the works of Soviet memoirists), they landed for refueling at the Finnish Utti airfield. The mining of the Kronstadt Bay was recorded (but, unfortunately, not stopped) by the command of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. The former commander of the KBF, Admiral V.F. Tributs writes in his memoirs: "... At 4 hours 45 minutes, the

commander of the Kronstadt naval base, Rear Admiral V.I. canal, and one of the planes fired at the Luga transport that was on the Krasnogorsk roadstead (195, p. 12). The reliability of the raid on Kronstadt is beyond doubt, but it should be noted that a relatively

accurate description of the events is found only in the post-war memoirs of A.A. Novikov. Intelligence report No. 01 of the headquarters of the 39th IAD, written in the hot pursuit of the events, contains very large inaccuracies: 2 aircraft instead of 14, "three-engine aircraft" (they could only be heavy transport "Ju-52") instead of twin-engine bombers "Ju-88", "torpedoing" instead of the actual dumping of deep mines. For the purposes of this study, it is more important to note

that **the use of Finnish airfields to carry out a raid on Kronstadt is not mentioned in a single word by the compilers of Intelligence Report No. 01, nor by the former commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad District.** Most likely a fact

landing and refueling of German aircraft at the Finnish Utti airfield was not at all known to the Soviet command. Two episodes

that occurred early in the morning, all recorded in the known combat reports (or mentioned in post-war books) military operations in the sky over the Leningrad region and Karelia on the first day of the war are exhausted.

June 23, 1941 Second day of the war

On the night of June 22-23, the actions of German aviation in the sky over the northern approaches to Leningrad received the most irrefutable confirmation - a German bomber was shot down by anti-aircraft artillery. The plane crashed on Soviet territory, the crew in full force (4 people) was taken prisoner. This fact was succinctly and accurately recorded in the operational report No. 02 of the headquarters of the Northern Front from 10:00 on June 23: *"Eighth. 2nd Air Defense Corps raised.*

The firing positions reflected [in] during the night a raid of enemy aircraft [on] Leningrad. The anti-aircraft artillery of Karperesheyk shot down one German aircraft" (255). In more detail - and much less reliably - this episode is

described in the Combat Report No. 1 of the headquarters of the Northern Air Defense Zone dated 8:00 23

June:

"1. From 01 to 02 June 23, enemy aircraft in two groups, consisting of up to 7-9 bombers each, tried at an altitude of 50-200 m to raid Leningrad points along the route: state border - Vyborg - Terioki (Zelenogorsk) . Met by fire from ZA in the Gorskaya-Sestroretsk area, one group changed course and went in the direction of Kronstadt, where 4 aircraft were shot down by fire from ZA KBF, which fell into the sea. The second group left in the direction of Art. Pesoch'naya (25 km north of the center of Leningrad) and dropped a bomb near the military camp. There are no casualties or destruction. This group was fired upon by fire from the 2nd Air Defense Corps, as a result 2 aircraft were shot down. The scattered remnants of the enemy groups went northwest to Finland..." (256) The message about supposedly "airplanes that fell

into the sea" corresponds to the Russian proverb "and ends in the water...". Validate

such reports, as a rule, nothing. As for the second "shot down" in the area of st. Sand plane, this information can only be slightly exaggerated. According to the famous Finnish aviation historian K-F. Geusta, on the morning of June 23, one Junkers Ju-88 (crew commander - Lieutenant E. Satorius) from the 3rd squadron of the KGr-806 group was shot down over the Karelian Isthmus, and the second crashed while landing at the Finnish airfield Utti, while one of the crew members died. It is possible that the plane was damaged by Soviet anti-aircraft guns, which caused the accident during landing.

A.A. Novikov also

writes about one (not two) German bomber shot down on the night of June 23: *"... On the night of*

June 23, an air raid signal sounded in the city of Lenin. For the first time, anti-aircraft guns also spoke. The 194th anti-aircraft artillery regiment of air defense met with its fire a group of Yu-88 bombers flying from the Gulf of Finland. Exactly at 0010 hours, the battery of Senior Lieutenant A.T. Pimchenkov shot down the first air vulture with a fascist swastika on its wings. The crew of the destroyed Yu-88 parachuted down and was taken prisoner..." (244, p. 47)

Apart from conflicting reports of an air raid on the night of June 22-23, there are no other reports of military operations in the sky over Leningrad in the documents of the Soviet command. The first German bomber shot down by the Northern Front Air Force fighters was indeed shot down on June 23, but this happened 250 km from Leningrad. On the morning of June 23, the pilot of the 158th IAP, Lieutenant A.V. Chirkov, piloting the latest Yak-1 fighter at that time, shot down a German bomber in the area between Pskov and Ostrov (the pilot identified it as Heinkel-111, but there were no bombers of this type in service with the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe; rather it was a Junkers Ju-88). In any case, this episode has nothing to do with the history of the use of Finnish airfields by German aviation.

June 24, 1941 Third day of the war

There were no reports of military clashes, air raids or bombing that day. In the morning Opersvodka No. 04 of the headquarters of the Northern

Front from 10:00 24

June we read:

"Fifth. The enemy Air Force continues to conduct reconnaissance in the direction of Leningrad with single aircraft and units. Air Force district in readiness for combat operations. Air defense aviation is patrolling the city of Leningrad. From 06:00 on June 23 to 06:00 on June 24, she made 231 flights. She had no encounters with enemy aircraft" (257). Evening Opersvodka No. 05 dated 22:00 June 24 almost verbatim

repeats in this respect the morning:

"Seventh. Air Force combat readiness front. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft. Air defense aviation is patrolling over Leningrad" (258). We find similar messages in operational reports.

connections of the Northern Front.

Operations report of the headquarters of the 23rd Army No. 04 dated

20:00 on June 24: *"... paragraph 6 There were no meetings with an air enemy, there were*

no losses" (259). Operational reports No. 3, 4, 5 of the headquarters of the 39th IAD (the last - dated 18:00 on June 25) monotonously duplicate the same phrase: *"The units carried out air defense tasks by patrolling in zones, the enemy was not detected, there were no air battles" (260).* The operational reports of the

headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps (the corps was deployed in the Vyborg region, that is, in the immediate vicinity of the border with Finland) from June 23 to 28 inclusive contain a message stating that *"the corps did not establish contact with the enemy, air raids on units hulls were not produced from the enemy's side" (261).* The day of June 24, 1941 turned into night. Morning Opersvodka No.

06 of the headquarters of the Northern Front from 10:00 on June 25 states:

"First. The night passed quietly. The troops of the Northern Front occupy the former areas with parts of the cover The 8th line brigade on the

Khanko Peninsula is unchanged. There were no encounters with the enemy. The enemy Air Force continues to conduct reconnaissance in the directions of Vyborg, Kexholm with single aircraft ... " (262)

That's all there was. More precisely and more correctly speaking - that's all that was recorded in June 1941 in the documents of the Soviet command. By the standards and ideas of peacetime, one emergency after another took place in the sky over Leningrad. In comparison with what happened in the first three days of the war, from June 22 to 24 inclusive, in the zone of the North-Western, Western and South-Western fronts (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Western Ukraine), Karelia and the Leningrad region could be considered quiet, a sleepy resort town, and even during the "off season".

It will suffice to recall that in the zone of these three fronts, on the first day of the war alone, German aviation carried out about **4,000 sorties**. For one day. Dozens of airfields, railway stations, command posts and headquarters of the Red Army were subjected to multiple massive bombardments on June 22. Tank and motorized divisions of the Wehrmacht in a number of areas covered 200–250 km, thus reaching the deep rear of the grouping of Soviet troops in the western districts. The uncontrollable remnants of the former armies, corps and divisions began a disorderly retreat to the east. In the zone of the Western and Northwestern fronts, the situation was already beginning to acquire the features of an unprecedented military catastrophe. And from this "point of view", on the scale of such a catastrophe, the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24, 1941, in which the grouping of German troops of "unspecified numbers" and German aviation, allegedly "systematically arriving on the territory of Finland", begins to look at least strange, are declared a threat "acquiring decisive importance ..."

At the end of this chapter, it is worth mentioning one more episode, equally insignificant and unreliable. Nevertheless, for the information of the most inquisitive readers, it is necessary to tell about

German

In memoirs, there are references to the fact that on June 22-23, German planes bombed the Hanko naval base. Some authors write that it was in the morning, others - in the evening. Even numbers are called - 20 aircraft. On the other hand, there is no mention of the bombing of Hanko in the documents of the headquarters of the Northern Front.

Opersvodka No. 01 of the headquarters of S.f. from
22-00 June 22 *"Hanko peninsula part of combat readiness. Families of
servicemen are evacuated on June 22 at 18:00 by the motor ship "Joseph
Stalin" (251).*

Opersvodka No. 06 of the headquarters of S.f.
from 10:00 on June 25 *"The 8th line brigade on the Hanko Peninsula is unchanged.
There were no clashes with the enemy..." (262)*

The first mention of hostilities on Hanko appears only in the Opersvodka
of the headquarters of S.f. No. 08 of 7:00 on June 26, but even there we are
talking only about shelling with ground artillery:

*"8 line brigade - on the night of June 26, the enemy opened rare artillery
and mortar fire throughout the peninsula. Our aircraft and artillery are firing at
enemy concentrations. Base personnel reinforce anti-tank and anti-personnel
obstacles" (283).* People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov in
his memoirs also

writes only about "flights over Hanko" (*"at a meeting in the office of I.V.
Stalin on the evening of June 24, I reported on the flights of Finnish and
German aircraft over Hanko, on the bombardment of our ships in Polyarny ..."*),
but not about the bombing of the naval base, which was subordinate to the
fleet, respectively, N.G. Kuznetsov should have known about the bombing of
Hanko before anyone else. The testimony of a living eyewitness of the events
sounds like this: *"... On the very first day of the war, German*

*bombers appeared over the peninsula. I saw only one
flight of three aircraft and I assume that the bombs were dropped without
a definite predetermined target. Whether there were other planes, I do not
know, but the raid lasted only a few minutes in the morning and did not repeat
itself during the day. They dropped bombs, as they say, anywhere. Actually it
didn't get anywhere. The entire garrison was in safe shelters... The Germans
repeated another fruitless bombardment the next day..." (189)* According to
the author of this book, the most likely explanation for the events of the
morning of June 22 at Khanko would be the bombardment of the base by one
flight (three

aircraft) from the KBF Air Force. It was at this time (in the early morning
of June 22) that the Baltic Fleet aircraft bombed Finnish ships and fortifications
on the Aland Islands (and this is very close to Hanko).

In an endless labyrinth of coastal skerries, the commander of one link made a mistake in choosing a target and dropped bombs aimlessly on the

wrong peninsula. The option with the appearance of German bombers over Hanko seems extremely doubtful for the simplest reason - why? This base (i.e., a springboard for the landing of Soviet troops) was a problem for the Finns, but not for the Germans. The naval base of Hanko did not interfere with the Germans. Absolutely. The German fleet did not plan to break into the Gulf of Finland, but was engaged in the exact opposite thing - it mined the entrance to the bay. On the morning of June 22, the Luftwaffe had no "extra" aircraft, extra crews, and extra bombs. To risk planes and pilots (from airfields in East Prussia to Hanko about 600–700 km "one way", therefore, it will not be possible to cover bombers with fighters) out of "solidarity" with a future ally (Finland) the Germans hardly began. Throughout the war, not a single German aircraft and not a single German ship even approached Hanko. In any case, this issue requires further study.

Chapter 3.6

Shield and Sword

In the early morning of June 25, 1941, combat aircraft of the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet crossed the Finnish border. Before proceeding to a presentation of the course of this operation, the tasks set and the results achieved, it is necessary to get acquainted as accurately as possible with the composition and deployment of the forces of the parties.

The bomber forces of the aviation of the Leningrad District (Northern Front) were relatively small (small in comparison with the huge number of fighter aircraft that defended the air approaches to the "second capital" of the USSR).

In the immediate vicinity of Leningrad, **41 BADs** were based (headquarters in Gatchina), which included four bomber regiments. On June 22, 1941, the division commander, Colonel Novikov, issued Combat Order No. 1, according to which the regiments of the division were dispersed at operational airfields: 10 BAP - Gorodets airfield, 201 BAP - Sumy airfield, 202 BAP - Kerstovo airfield, 205 BAP - Kresttsy airfield (265). The 10th bomber regiment was an "old" personnel air regiment that took part in the "winter war" and was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for the "feats" committed in that war. The 201st, 202nd and 205th regiments were relatively "young" - their formation began at the end of 1940. However, one should not think that the "young" regiments were staffed only by graduates of flight schools - the command staff, as a rule, was made up of pilots with extensive combat experience. So, in the 202nd BAP, *"the regiment commander, Colonel N.F. Efimov, was awarded the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner, the navigator of the regiment, Major G.I. Gabunia, was awarded two Orders of the Red Banner. Squadron commanders, their deputies and navigators also had government awards ... All of them had significant service and combat experience gained in the skies of Spain, in battles on Lake Khasan, the Khalkhin Gol River, in the war with the White Finns and in*

the time of the liberation campaign in western Ukraine and western Belarus ... ” (266) A

characteristic feature of the “two hundredth” regiments was that, when fully staffed with flight personnel, they had a relatively small number of combat aircraft. Judging by the memoirs of the former commander of the Air Force of the Northern Front, A.A. Novikov, 41 dietary supplements were armed with 114 aircraft (244, p. 69). Most likely, the air marshal named the total number of aircraft, including those temporarily out of order. The documents of the fund 41 dietary supplements indicate the exact number of combat-ready aircraft in the regiments of the division as of June 27, 1941 (267). There is no earlier information (for June 22 or 25). Nevertheless, summing up the number of aircraft remaining on June 27, 1941 with the number of combat losses, we get the following minimum (precisely “minimal”, since, in addition to combat losses, there could also be technical malfunctions and accidents)

10 БАП	38 СБ
201 БАП	25 СБ
202 БАП	19 СБ
205 БАП	13 СБ
всего в 41 БАД:	95

The 2nd Air Division was based significantly south of Leningrad (headquarters in Staraya Russa). The division included three bomber (2 BAP, 44 BAP, 58 BAP) and one assault (65 ShAP) air regiments. The presence of an assault regiment transferred this division to the category of “mixed”, and in most documents it is referred to as 2 SAD. In fact, no mention of the participation of 65 ShAP, armed with I-15 bis light biplane fighters, was found in the air strike on Finland, and in reality 2 SAD acted as a bomber formation. This division, the old personnel division of the Soviet Air Force, was both quantitatively and qualitatively better equipped than 41 BADs. Two of its regiments (2nd and 58th) had already received the latest Ar-2 and Pe-2 dive bombers at that time.

As of June 23, 1941, the division was based: headquarters and 58 BAP at the St. Russa, 44 BAPs at the Tuleblya and Ivanovka airfields, 2 BAPs at the Kresttsy airfield (all in the Novgorod region). The number of combat-ready aircraft, indicated on the basis of documents from the headquarters of the bomber regiments, is given in the table (268):

	боеготовые самолеты	Итого:
2 БАП	23 СБ + 21 «Ар-2»	44
44 БАП	? СБ +? «Пе-2»	46
58 БАП	38 СБ + 14 «Пе-2»	52
всего в 2 САД		142

55 SAD (headquarters in Petrozavodsk) included one bomber aviation regiment (72 BAP), which was armed with 45 SB bombers (of which 40 were in good condition) and 4 new Pe-2s. Total - 44 combat-ready aircraft (data as of

June 1, 1941) (269). Thus, the Air Force of the Northern Front could use **about 280 serviceable bombers in a massive air strike on Finnish airfields**. A characteristic feature of the bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front was a significant excess of the number of crews (about 450) over the number of serviceable aircraft (269). We emphasize once again that all figures characterizing the number and

technical condition of combat aircraft should be considered only as indicative, which differ with a spread of 10-15% even in the documents of the same division. And this is not surprising - an aircraft in military aviation is a consumable item that is constantly updated, broken down, repaired, etc. Accordingly, it is impossible in principle to indicate the exact number of combat-ready aircraft.

The Air Force **of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet** (commander - Major General of Aviation V.V. Ermachenkov) had three bombers

regiment: 1 MTAP (mine and torpedo regiment), 57 BAP, 73 BAP. The first two were part of the 8th bomber brigade and were based at the airfields Bezzabotnoye and Kotly (30–70 km west of Leningrad). Naval aviation airfields were located in close proximity to the southern (Soviet) coast of the Gulf of Finland, and 1 MTAP and three (out of five) squadrons of 57 BAP were armed with long-range bombers "DB-3" / "DB-3f", which from these airfields could reach almost any point in southern and central Finland. 73 BAP (five squadrons armed with SB and Ar-2 bombers) was based at the Pärnu airfield in Estonia. In total, these three aviation regiments of the KBF Air Force were armed with **174 combat-ready aircraft**, of which 91 DB-3, 66 SB, 17 Ar-2 (270, 271, 277). In all countries (and the Soviet Union was no exception), naval aviation is the elite of

the armed forces. The reason for this is very simple: "the sea does not forgive." Neither I-16 nor DB-3 could make an emergency landing on the water. Yes, and a parachute over the northern seas does not help much - a person does not live long in the icy water of the winter Baltic or the Barents Sea. The very first mistake in piloting, loss of orientation, poor-quality pre-flight preparation of the aircraft become the last for the crew of naval aviation. That is why there are no weak pilots in the aviation of the Navy. And among all the formations of naval aviation, it was the KBF Air Force that had the greatest combat experience, and this experience was acquired on the same theater, which was to operate in June 1941. The ports of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia (Helsinki, Turku, Vaasa, Pori, Kotka) were invariably present in all pre-war operational plans of the Baltic Fleet Air Force as top-priority bombing targets. Since the "winter war" there were two more "priority objects" - the Finnish coastal defense battleships "Ilmarinen" and "Väinämöinen" (there were simply no other large surface ships in the Finnish Navy), which in December 1939 could not be sunk , nor damage. They prepared very hard for a new war in the skies over the Baltic. Here is what the former navigator of the 1st MTAP, Lieutenant General P.I., writes about this in his memoirs.

Khokhlov:

*"... The previous studies and military operations ("winter war." - M.S.) yielded results. Crews were able to fly during the day in the ranks of units, and two squadrons could fly at night, in simple weather conditions ... Sniper crews for bombing and mine laying appeared in the regiment. Many flights were carried out using radio navigation aids. DB-3 aircraft were already equipped with RPK-2 radio semi-compasses, which were competently used in flights. The most trained crews mastered flights in the clouds. On average , **each crew flew more than 200 hours in 1940** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) " (134). 200 hours of annual flight time is a very worthy indicator. Especially against the backdrop*

of incessant mournful sighs in Russian pseudo-historical literature about the fact that the flight crew of Soviet aviation in the summer of 1941 consisted of "yellow-mouthed chicks", half-educated cadets with a flight time of 4 hours a year "on a box" ...

Fighter aviation of Finland was the largest part of the small Air Force of this country. Organizationally, the Finnish fighters were consolidated into five relatively complete air groups: **1. LLv24**, commander - Major G. Magnusson. It was

the most experienced and most productive (according to the results of the "winter war") fighter group of the Finnish Air Force. The LLv-24 had four squadrons (a non-standard large number), three of which (25 aircraft) were based at the Vesivehmaa airfield (near Lahti), and one at the Selyanpää airfield near the Kouvola railway station (in Soviet documents, this airfield is often referred to as "Valkeala" - by the name of a nearby settlement). In total, the LLv24 group was armed with **33 American-made Brewster fighters** .

2. LLv26, commander - Major R. Haryu-Yenti. All three squadrons of the group were based at the Joroinen airfield (20 km southeast of the Pieksämäki railway station). The LLv-24 group was armed with **26 Italian-made Fiat G-50 fighters** .

3. LLv28, commander - captain S-I. Sirin. Three squadrons of the group were based at the Naarajärvi airfield (8 km west of Pieksyamäki station). The group was armed with **27 Moran fighters**. **"MS-406"** French production.

4. LLv32, commander - captain E. Heinil. This air group, with its meager forces, was supposed to cover the capital of the state and the important railway junction of Rihimäki - Hyvinkä. Two squadrons of the LLv-32 air group were based at the Hyvinkä airfield (40 km north of Helsinki). They were armed with Dutch-made **Fokker D-21** fighters, outdated by the time of the Winter War. The fighters of the group, in addition, were physically very worn out, because they were Fokkers, manufactured under license at a factory in Tampere in the spring - summer of 1939 and went through the entire war. As a result, out of 24 fighters of the LLv-32 group, **only 12** were in combat readiness on June 25, 1941.

5. LLv30, commander - Captain L. Bremer. The group consisted of three squadrons, of which only one (2nd) was fully equipped with aircraft. Two squadrons armed with **18 Fokker D-2 fighters** (assembled in Tampere after the "winter war" and equipped with a more powerful American engine PW R580) were based at the airfield of the port city of Pori. The 1st squadron of the LLv30 group was based at the Hollola airfield (Lahti area). It was armed with **5 English-made Hurricane fighters**.

In addition to the five fighter groups mentioned above, there were three more understaffed even to half the regular strength of the group, the squadrons of which were scattered throughout southern Finland. The 2nd squadron of the LLv-12 group, which was armed with **3 Gladiators** (an English biplane fighter outdated by the time of the Winter War), was based at the Puumala airfield (50 km east of Mikkeli). The 3rd squadron of the LLv-12 group, which was armed with **7 Fokkers**, was based at the Mikkeli airfield. The 1st squadron of the LLv14

group was based at the Utti airfield (area of the railway station of Kouvola). She was armed with **6 "Gladiators"**. The 3rd squadron of the LLv14 group was based at

Padasjoki airfield (45 km north of Lahti). She was armed with **6 Fokkers. 5 fighters** (captured Soviet "**I-153**") were part of the 3rd squadron of the LLv-6 group, based at the airfield of the city of Turku (311). Two more squadrons

(1/LLv-12 at the Joroinen airfield and 2/LLv-14 at the Valkeala airfield) were in reserve, since at the end of June 1941 they were re-equipped with the conditionally "new" American Hawk P-36 fighters.

In total, the fighter units of the Finnish Air Force had **160 aircraft** of eight different types, of which **148 units** were in combat readiness by June 25, 1941. A third of all fighters (52 serviceable aircraft) were fairly battered veterans of the "winter war": the Dutch "Fokkers" and the English "Gladiators". It should be noted right away that in the summer of 1941, not a single German Messerschmitt was in service with the Finnish Air Force (the first Bf-109 G-2 in the amount of 30 units were purchased by Finland only in the spring of 1943).

The depressing variety of aircraft and aircraft engines was not the only problem facing the technical services of the Finnish air regiments. Repair and maintenance of aviation equipment had to be carried out practically without original factory spare parts. The reason for this becomes clear if we recall the origin of the Finnish Air Force fighter aircraft. The best situation was with the Fokkers.

The defeat and occupation of Holland by the Wehrmacht did not immediately affect the situation in the Finnish Air Force, since Finland prudently bought a license for the unlimited production of Fokkers at the state aircraft factory in Tampere in the summer of 1937. However, both for "unlimited" and for the most minimal production of aircraft, engines were needed. Of course, there was no own aircraft engine production in Finland. The Fokkers of the Finnish assembly were first installed with British Bristol-Mercury engines, and then with much more powerful American R-1830 Twin Wasp engines. After the occupation of Norway and the emergence of German military and naval bases a few kilometers from the Finnish port of Petsamo, the transport corridor between Finland and the Atlantic was practically closed.

Thus, the possibility of obtaining new British or American engines, aircraft and spare parts for them has decreased almost to zero. Of course, the steady German-Finnish rapprochement, which did not remain a secret either for London or Washington, also influenced the curtailment of cooperation. As for the receipt of French aircraft, the deliveries ceased simultaneously with the liquidation of independent France itself. True, later (in 1941-1942) the Germans sold Finland (sold for money, and did not give at all out of a sense of allied solidarity) captured Morans (57 aircraft) and American Hawks (44 aircraft) captured by them in during the fighting in France. Until the spring of 1943, this "thin stream" of supplies of extremely worn out, battle-damaged aircraft was one of the two available sources for updating the Finnish Air Force aircraft fleet. The second source was captured Soviet fighters and engines from them.

A detailed analysis of the performance characteristics of Finnish Air Force fighters goes far beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we restrict ourselves to only the briefest review. The Fokker D-21 was designed as an easy-to-operate, reliable, and cheap fighter for the colonial troops of the Dutch West Indies. It was the desire for maximum simplification and reduction in the cost of the design that predetermined the use of a non-retractable landing gear, which for aircraft of the second half of the 30s was already an obvious anachronism. In terms of armament (4 rifle-caliber machine guns) and engine power (750 hp), this fighter corresponded to early modifications of the famous Soviet "donkey" ("I-16" type 10), but it was noticeably heavier (2050 kg versus 1716 kg), had a lower speed and rate of climb than the I-16. The French fighter "Moran" "MS 406" first took to the air on August 8, 1935. It

was one of the first "new wave" fighters in the world ("sharp-nosed" high-speed monoplane fighters with liquid-cooled engines and retractable landing gear) and the very first serial cannon-armed fighter. The first one could not become the best: the main congenital defect of this aircraft was the discrepancy between the engine power and the weight of the structure. The table below shows that even in comparison with the

a heavy modification of the "donkey" ("I-16" type 28, armed with two 20-mm guns) "Moran", with less than 200 hp. engine power, was half a ton heavier. As a result, the power-to-weight ratio of the Moran MS-406 turned out to be one and a half times less than that of the I-16, which predetermined low acceleration and maneuverability. In order to

somehow "hold out" the maximum speed of the aircraft to the coveted mark of 500 km / h, the Moran used an unprecedented engine cooling radiator retractable into the fuselage. As a result, with the radiator released into the air stream, the Moran did not gain even 450 km / h, but with the radiator removed, the engine quickly "boiled". In addition, the Moran's gas tank did not have a protector, the pilot's seat had armored backs, and the hydraulic system turned out to be very capricious. The very first air battles with the German "Messerschmitts" convinced the French command that the "Moran" had grown old, without having had time to really be born. In the spring of 1940, French fighter air groups began to re-equip at a feverish pace with more advanced aircraft. In just three weeks, from May 10 to June 5, six fighter groups of French aviation "were freed" from the Morans, transferring to the Devuatin D-520, Bloch MV-152 and the American Hawk. For the Finnish

aviation "Moran" (the first planes arrived in February 1940 and managed to take part in the "winter war") was a precious gift. This fighter was able to catch up with the Soviet SB bomber in the air, and the gun made it possible to use the fighter for effective attack on ground targets. And later, during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war, "Moran" was

used as a "fighter-attack aircraft", in particular - to fight on railway communications (a 20-mm cannon pierced the walls of a steam locomotive boiler from a short distance). Another "advantage" of the French veteran in the Finnish service was that the M-100 / M-103 / M-105 aircraft engines installed on the Soviet SB, Ar-2 and Pe- 2, Yak and LaGG fighters, were a forced licensed version of the Hispano-Suiza 12Yy31 engine installed on Morans. Thus, among the wreckage of the downed Soviet

Finns received a rich source of spare parts for Moránov engines ...
The Italian

Fiat G-50, the American Hawk and Brewster, the Soviet I-16, for all their outward dissimilarity, were aircraft of the same class and one generation: maneuverable fighters of the late 30s with an air-cooled engine. The latest modifications of the I-16, thanks to a powerful engine and a record low weight (as a result, a uniquely high thrust-to-weight ratio), surpassed their peers in terms of horizontal and vertical maneuverability, while not inferior in speed. The advantage of the "Americans" was aerodynamic (significantly lower coefficient of perfection of aerodynamic resistance), thanks to which they surpassed well as a the "donkey" in the ability to accelerate in a dive, as large fuel reserve, traditional for all US Air Force aircraft, respectively - large (huge by the standards of the Soviet Air Force) range of flight. It is also worth noting that the Fiat and Brewster, armed with heavy machine guns, undoubtedly surpassed the machine gun modifications of the donkey (I-16 type 18, type 24) in terms of firepower.

	Вес пустого	Вес взлетный	Мощность взлетная, л.с.	Скорость максим.	Скорость вертик. м/мин	Дальность	Вооружение
«Моран» «MS-406»	1900	2470	860	490	667	800	1 * 20 + 2 * 7,5
«И-16» тип 28	1403	1988	1100	470	882	445	2 * 20 + 2 * 7,62
«Хоук» «P-36»	2121	2600	1050	490	930	1200	6 * 7,7
«Фиат» «G-50»	1963	2403	840	473	?	670	2 * 12,7
«Брюстер» «B-239»	2104	3103	950	487	?	1500	3 * 12,7 + 1 * 7,7
«И-16» тип 24	1383	1780	1100	489	938	440	4 * 7,62

In general, the fighter aircraft of the Finnish Air Force in terms of the main performance characteristics were quite consistent with the so-called obsolete Soviet fighters (I-16 and I-153) at the beginning of the war. The difference, and the difference is striking, was in the history of their combat use. Thousands of donkeys and seagulls were abandoned at border airfields in the very first days and weeks of the war, while Brewsters, Fiats and Morans continued to fight successfully until the summer of 1944, and Finnish pilots, piloting these "museum exhibits," continued to shoot down everything they saw in the air: the new Soviet Yak-9 and La-5, the American Lend-Lease Cobras and Kittyhawks ... July 29, 1944 Sergeant V. Rinkeneva, piloting the "Seagull" "I-153", shot down the "Aerocobra" "R-39". This is not a "hunting story", but a real fact, and the downed plane was found on the ground in the area

of st. Loimola (52, p. 356). Now, from the discussion of tactical and technical characteristics, let's return to the issue of basing Finnish fighter aircraft, which is more relevant for this chapter. Spreading on

geographical map of all the above-mentioned fighter groups and squadrons, we find only **seven "airfield nodes"**: - the area of

\u200b\u200bst. Pieksämäki, Naarajärvi and Joroinen airfields, 53 fighters in total;

- the region of Lahti, the airfields of Vesivehmaa, Hollola and Padasjoki, a total of

36 fighters; - the area of the city of Pori, the airfield of Pori, a total of 18 fighters; - district st. Kouvola, Valkeala (Selenpää) and Utti airfields,

14 fighters in total; - the area of Helsinki, Hyvinkää airfield, a total of 12

serviceable fighters; - Mikkeli area, Mikkeli and Puumala airfields, 10 fighters in

total; - area. Turku, Turku airfield, only 5 fighters. All fighter aviation was based at 12 airfields. If we exclude such airfields from this list, on which only 3-8 aircraft were based, then exactly **five airfields will remain**: Naarajärvi (27 aircraft), Joroinen (26 aircraft), Vesivehmaa (25 aircraft), Pori (18 aircraft) and Hyvinkää (12 aircraft). The concentration of aviation on such a small number of airfields undoubtedly created a dangerous situation for the Finnish side - the fighter groups themselves turned into a target for a devastating air strike.

Comparing the number of airfields with the number of bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Fleet and the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, it is easy to see that the Soviet command could allocate two regiments of bombers to attack each of the five main airfields of the Finnish Air Force, while covering them with three regiments of

fighters ... It is rather difficult to understand **the** logic just such a distribution of fighter aviation forces. The capital of the state and the two largest (by Finnish standards) cities (Turku and Tampere) are covered by disproportionately small forces. The largest group of fighters (two air groups, a third of all combat-ready aircraft) is located in the area of st. Pieksämäki, 200–250 km from the border, from Helsinki and Tampere. One gets the impression that

The Finnish leadership, not excluding the possibility of a sudden massive strike by the Soviet Union, pulled the main forces of fighter aircraft into the interior of the country.

This decision becomes clear if we again turn to the geographical map. The capital of Finland, the most important ports, railway lines and junction stations are located on the coast of the Gulf of Finland or in close proximity to it. From the point of view of building an air defense system, this circumstance creates a huge problem. The fact is that in the absence of radars (and in the summer of 1941 there were no radars in the air defense of Finland), the entire air attack warning system was based on the use of many hundreds of visual observation posts (supplemented in the most important directions with noise direction-finding installations). So, for example, the air defense of Leningrad included 263 VNOS observation posts ("air surveillance, warning, communications") and 23 separate fighter aviation guidance posts (and this is in addition to eight radar stations!). The Moscow air defense system had seven radar

stations and 610 VNOS posts. It was not possible to place a comparable number of VNOS posts in the waters of the Gulf of Finland; accordingly, an enemy aircraft could appear over the airfield in the suburbs of Helsinki or Turku before the air raid siren sounds.

In any case, the deployment of the Finnish Air Force forces, which actually existed on June 25, 1941, **is absolutely incompatible with the version that the Finnish army was already deployed in June 1941 to invade the Soviet "Karelian-Finland"**. Aviation, as we can see, turned out to be many hundreds of kilometers from the area of the future offensive of the ground forces of the Finnish army (it began on July 10 in Ladoga Karelia, in the Joensuu-Ilomantsi zone). So they don't prepare for the attack. On the eve of June 22, 1941, the Germans deployed their fighter groups at a distance of only a few tens of kilometers from the Soviet border, after the start of the invasion, the fighter groups "clung" literally close to the front line. Often, Luftwaffe fighters landed on airfields (former Soviet ones), which were located a few kilometers from covered bridges and crossings.

Completely similar tactics were followed by the command of the Finnish Air Force. In the "Reference on Accounting for the Battles of the Patriotic War on the Front of the 23rd Army" signed on December 15, 1941, we read: *"It should be noted that enemy aircraft had their airfields much closer to the battlefield than our aircraft, and appeared over the target much faster, than our fighters arrived"* (313). And if the Finnish command had already decided in mid-June to go on the offensive, then the fighter groups would have turned out to be much east of those airfields where they were caught (more precisely, should have been caught) by a Soviet air strike.

All of the above in no way suggests that the destruction of Finnish aviation at base airfields could become a simple and "win-win" operation. Finnish aviation, of course, was outnumbered by the bomber forces of the Air Forces of the Northern Front and the Baltic Fleet (approximately in the proportion of 3 to 1), but this simple arithmetic by no means guarantees success. The very task of destroying (or at least significantly weakening) enemy aircraft in the course of the first few strikes on airfields is extremely difficult. This question deserves a separate discussion, because for many years in Soviet historical propaganda (or "propaganda history" - as you like), a legend has developed about super-efficiency, allegedly inherent in this tactic. In the entire Soviet "mythology of war" there was, perhaps, no myth more rooted and rooted than the myth of "a sudden crushing blow to airfields." Before bringing down another tedious stream of figures and facts on the reader, we will cite two rather characteristic fragments from literary (one might even say fantastic) works:

"... Three planes slipped out of the twilight of the sky, crossed the border of the airfield on a strafing flight and rushed to the long lines of standing fighters. In a second they were already above them, and a shower of two-kilogram fragmentation bombs poured from their belly. Hot fragments crashed into the wings and fuselages, pierced gas tanks ... Streams of burning gasoline flooded one fighter at a time.

others. The three Heinkel 111s turned lazily and circled once more over the airfield, spraying machine-gun fire into the burning wreckage as the stunned pilots jumped out of their beds. In two minutes, the division as a combat unit ceased to exist ... The division commander stood among the wreckage and cried ... " (273)

"... The flight personnel of the aviation units that were attacked showed perseverance. The officers rushed to the cars, despite the explosions of bombs and machine-gun fire from attack aircraft. They pulled planes out of burning hangars. The fighters were running across the cratered field towards the impenetrable wall of the smoke screen and the continuous glare of explosions. Many immediately overturned in the funnels, others flew up, thrown up by the burst of bombs, and fell in a pile of burning debris ... And yet, some managed to take off. With the courage of blind despair and malice, no longer following any plan, out of order, they entered the battle ... "(274) Comparison of

the content (and even style) of these two texts allows you to immediately clarify the concepts under discussion.

War is an armed confrontation **between two sides, two opponents, each of which**, in order to achieve victory, shows "perseverance", "courage", sometimes "malice" caused by "blind despair". It is precisely as one of the tactical methods of waging war that an air strike on airfields based on enemy aircraft should be considered. If the pilots of one of the parties are sleeping soundly like innocent babies and only their commander does not sleep, but cries bitterly; if the planes refueled (!) with fuel, without any supervision and protection, are lined up in "long lines" on an airfield abandoned by personnel, then this is not a war. This should be called something else (criminal negligence, malicious violation of the Charters and Instructions, mass desertion, betrayal), but not "war". And in order to destroy the "long lines" of ownerless aircraft, even three "lazy" bombers - this is too much luxury. It would be easier and cheaper to send a dozen saboteurs armed with "sharpening" (for piercing gas tanks) and matches (for setting fire to "streams of gasoline pouring from holes").

If, however, we discuss an attack on airfields in terms and categories of war (i.e., taking into account the inevitable opposition of armed

enemy), then this tactic seems to be a very complex, costly and risky undertaking. Why?

First of all, because the most important component of combat aviation is not aircraft, but pilots. A strike on airfields - even the most successful for the attacking side - only leads to the destruction of aircraft. And aircraft in aviation (we repeat this once again) are nothing more than consumables. The attacking side loses in the air over the airfield **not only planes, but also pilots**. Moreover, **it loses irrevocably** - a pilot shot down over the airfield will either die (it is almost impossible to use a parachute on a low-level flight), or will be captured. Both that and another in military language is called "irretrievable loss". Secondly, it is much more difficult to destroy an aircraft on the

ground than in the air. The flying object is vulnerable in flight. A single hole in the engine cooling radiator, a single control rod broken by a fragment of an anti-aircraft shell, a piece of the elevator skin torn out by a shell rupture of the smallest caliber air gun will lead to a fall or, in the most favorable case, to an emergency landing, in which the aircraft everything will be completely destroyed. If this landing takes place on enemy territory (and during a raid on an enemy airfield, this is likely to happen), then the downed aircraft will go into the category of "irretrievable losses". Again - along with an extremely scarce pilot in the war. An aircraft standing on the ground can be irretrievably destroyed only if it is directly hit by an air bomb. Shrapnel "wounds" from an aerial bomb that

exploded to the side disable the aircraft, but **only for the duration of the repair**. And this time - depending on the severity of the damage, the equipment and qualifications of the repair services - can be only a few days or even a few hours. Is it easy to achieve a direct hit with a bomb on an aircraft? According to the Main Directorate of the Red Army Air Force, the crew of the SB bomber, when bombing from a height of 2 km, on average achieved 39% of the dropped bombs in a rectangle of 200 by 200 meters, and the average circular deviation from the aiming point was 140 meters (269). Simply put, there was no question of any targeted bombing on such a point target as an aircraft. Moreover, for

targeted bombing, you need to see the target - but with this, in the event of a strike on airfields, there are big problems.

The simplest camouflage nets (or even a simple bunch of green branches) in combination with decoys (simple and cheap aircraft mock-ups made of plywood, boards and cardboard) make the task of visually detecting an aircraft on the ground almost unsolvable. It was possible to realize this "almost" only by descending to extremely low altitudes (50–100 m), which is not at all simple (there were no automatic terrain tracking machines at that time) and very dangerous (at such a height, even an aircraft can be shot down heavy rifle fire). But that's not all - in order to exclude the destruction of the aircraft by fragments of the bomb dropped by it, the bombing had to be carried out either from a height of more than 300–500 meters, or using a delayed action fuse. However, the latter method turned out to be even less effective, since a horizontally flying bomb, after being dropped from an extremely low altitude, ricocheted and fell at a completely random point.

The FAB-100 high-explosive aerial bomb (the most massive ammunition of the Soviet bomber aviation) left a funnel with a diameter of 10-15 meters in the ground. A hundred mobilized men from a neighboring village could fill it up in half an hour. Manually. With the use of technology, it was even easier to restore the unpaved runway destroyed by the raid. Again, it must be borne in mind that the I-16 fighter of the above modifications (type 24, type 28) had a takeoff speed of 130 km / h, a takeoff run of 210 m, a runway of 380 m. such a class could serve as a flat clearing, compacted with a skating rink or lined with easily removable metal panels. Therefore, attempts to disable the airfield by destroying unpaved runways would be even more costly and ineffective ...

It is worth noting that the legend about the super-effectiveness of strikes against airfields was invented by Soviet "historians" retroactively. It was invented when it was necessary to find relatively decent explanations for the terrible defeat of the Soviet Air Force in the summer of 1941. The very limited possibilities of this tactic were well known to military specialists long before June 22, 1941.

Already on the basis of studying the experience of the war in Spain, absolutely correct conclusions were

made: "... *In the first period of the war, both sides conducted intensive operations on airfields in order to gain air supremacy. Subsequently, however, they **almost completely abandoned*** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) *from this. Experience has shown that operations on airfields produce very limited results.*

Firstly, because aviation is dispersed at airfields (no more than 12–15 aircraft per airfield) and is well camouflaged; secondly, airfields are covered by anti-aircraft artillery and machine guns, which forces attacking aircraft to drop bombs from high altitudes with a low probability of hitting; thirdly, the damage to the airfield by air bombs is so insignificant that it almost does not delay the departure of enemy aircraft; minor damage to the airfield was quickly repaired, and broken communications were restored.

*Very often, bombers dropped bombs on an empty airfield, as enemy aircraft had time to take to the air in advance. For example, in July 1937, the rebels made **70 raids** on the airfield in Alcala **in groups of up to 35 aircraft**. As a result of these raids, **2 people were injured, two planes and a truck** were destroyed ... " (275) Fighting in China and Khalkhin Gol followed Spain. New*

combat experience again showed that a strike on airfields, while remaining an important component of the struggle for air supremacy, was by no means a miraculous remedy that allowed destroying enemy aircraft with a single wave of a "magic wand". At a well-known meeting of the highest command staff of the Red Army on December 23–31, 40, combat experience was summarized as follows:

G.P. Kravchenko: "The main thing is air combat... I am based on my own experience. During the operations at Khalkhin Gol, in order to defeat only one airfield, I had to fly out several times as part of a regiment. I took off with 50–60 aircraft, while at this airfield there were only 17–18 aircraft.

CM. Budyonny: "You spoke about losses at airfields, but what is the ratio in losses at airfields and in the air?"

G.P. Kravchenko: "I believe that the ratio between losses at airfields will be as follows: in particular, at Khalkhin Gol, I had this - I destroyed 1/8 of the part on the ground and 7/8 in the air." G.M. Stern: "And about the same ratio in other places" (276).

Similar patterns

emerged during the famous Battle of Britain. Thus, during the first four days of the German air offensive, from August 12 to 15, 1940, Luftwaffe pilots destroyed **47 British** fighters at the airfields - at the cost of losing **122 of their own** aircraft. The next "round" of combat in the skies over RAF airfields took place from 23 August to 7 September. The British then lost 277 fighters, but the Germans also lost 378 aircraft of all types. Taking into account the fact that many British pilots managed to safely use a parachute and land on their own territory, the ratio of pilot losses (during different periods of the Battle of Britain) was 5 to 1 or even 7 to 1. Of course, not in favor of the attacking side.

Returning to the real history of the Great Patriotic War, we can also state more than eloquent facts. Throughout the war, the losses of Soviet Air Force aircraft at airfields were the smallest category of losses. Specifically, in 1942, 1943, 1944, **204, 239, 210 aircraft were irretrievably lost from enemy strikes on airfields, respectively, which amounted to 2.47%, 2.52%, 2.68%** of the total number of irretrievable losses (269). In other words, on a huge front of the war, the huge number (at least 10 thousand combat aircraft) of the Soviet military aviation lost less than one aircraft per day from strikes on airfields! Such low losses are by no means connected with the fact that the enemy has completely abandoned attacks on airfields. For example, in 1944, 1,416 German aircraft sorties were recorded, the purpose of which was to attack Soviet airfields (269). Thus, **to destroy one** Soviet Air Force aircraft on the ground, **the enemy spent 6.7 sorties**. Somehow these facts are poorly combined with entertaining stories about "three lazily deployed Heinkels" that destroy an entire air division (i.e., about 200-300 aircraft), and "in two minutes" ...